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ABSTRACT

The Task Force on Early Childhood and Elementary Education, created by the Texas State Board of Education in January 1993, found that the current system of early childhood and elementary education is struggling to meet the challenges of childhood in today's Texas. This report summarizes the task force's call for schools to reconfigure themselves to keep pace with the changing needs of students and communities. Specifically, it presents the task force's vision for the reorganized early childhood or elementary school in Texas, which includes the following components: (1) developmentally appropriate curriculum that uses flexible grouping of students on a regular basis for active, participatory involvement and presentation of knowledge through interdisciplinary themes and units; (2) school calendars that permit flexible and extended-year schedules to accommodate each child's learning style and pace; (3) abundant opportunities for each child to attain high standards of achievement through acceleration and enrichment of all learning activities on a continuous basis; and (4) performance-based assessments that demonstrate continuous student progress toward academic standard, and allow continuous movement through the system by the students upon attainment of benchmark standards. The eight sections of this report present: (1) a policy statement on early childhood and elementary education; (2) questions and answers on developmentally appropriate education; (3) executive summary of the report; (4) mission and philosophy of developmentally appropriate education; (5) discussion and recommendations in the areas of organization, curriculum, instruction, and assessment; (6) recommendations on professional development and training; (7) discussion and recommendations about family and community collaboration; and (8) implementation steps. Contains 75 references. (TJQ)

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Report of the Task Force
on Early Childhood and Elementary Education

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on Early Childhood and Elementary Education

Texas Education Agency
Austin, Texas

January 1994

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Policy Statement on Early Childhood and Elementary Education

Mission

The mission of early childhood and elementary education is to nurture the intellectual, emotional, social, and physical growth of all children. Our responsibility, as parents and educators, community members and citizens, is to create developmentally appropriate educational settings that prepare all children for success in school and active participation in the civic, economic, and cultural lives of their communities.

Philosophy

Early childhood and elementary education in Texas encompasses the programs and settings that serve children from birth to entrance into middle school. During these important years, a child's intellectual, emotional, social, and physical growth is supported within the home, school, and community. Children learn and develop differently. Families, educators, and community members support these differences with education and early care settings that provide each child with the time, opportunities, and resources needed to achieve the goals of early childhood and elementary education. We expect nothing less than every child's attainment of a firm foundation in reading and mastery of a developmentally appropriate early childhood and elementary curriculum. We are committed to changing our systems and settings of education, early care, and community support to ensure that each child achieves these goals.

Developmentally appropriate early childhood and elementary education focuses on the principles and stages of child development, fosters individual interests and understanding, recognizes the social nature of learning, and values cultural and linguistic diversity. Effective early childhood and elementary programs expand opportunities for learning – enriching the curriculum, enhancing instruction, and extending learning time to accommodate each child's culture, language, learning style, and pace. Early childhood and elementary education programs help create caring communities that demonstrate, through school climate, curriculum, and instruction, respect for others, commitment to shared values, and emphasis on the importance of enhancing the self-worth of each child. The most effective programs establish strong connections between the family and the school.

Developmentally appropriate early childhood and elementary education is based on the principle that children construct knowledge from active experience with their physical and social environments. Early childhood programs engage each child in a multidimensional learning environment that combines instruction and play to create a foundation for future academic and personal success. Elementary education builds upon that foundation to connect children's growing sense of independence and increased cognitive abilities to learning opportunities that encourage critical thinking, problem solving, exploration, and creativity.

Organization

Effective early childhood and elementary education programs are organized around the children they serve. Early childhood education serves children in early care settings, prekindergarten, and the primary grade levels. Elementary education extends from primary to entrance into middle school. Early childhood and elementary educators implement instructional practices, organizational arrangements, and staffing patterns to prevent early school failure and assure that no student is retained. Each child's intellectual, emotional, social, and physical growth is supported with curriculum, instruction, and classroom organization that is geared to stages of child development rather than specific grade levels. Within age- and individually appropriate instructional settings, educators cultivate each student's understanding of the curriculum and support each child's progress toward educational goals.

Curriculum

All children come to school equipped with knowledge and skills learned from their families and communities. The curriculum in developmentally appropriate early childhood and elementary programs builds on this learning to provide each child with an array of opportunities for acquiring subject area understanding and enabling creative thought and expression. Reading is the fundamental skill that supports each child's attainment of educational goals. The ability to understand and use written language and communicate effectively is critical to each child's understanding of the curriculum and thoughtful engagement in the world outside school.

Developmentally appropriate curriculum enables continuous learning and intellectual, emotional, social, and physical growth. Students achieve understanding through interdisciplinary instruction and thematic activities. The curriculum builds upon children's interests, experiences, and community resources to connect each student's acquisition of essential skills and knowledge to the goals of early childhood and elementary education.

Instruction

Early childhood and elementary instruction is child-centered, multifaceted, and systematic. Classroom activities challenge student understanding and are strengthened by student diversity. Instruction addresses the cultures, languages, and learning styles of all students. Depth of understanding, rather than subject coverage, guides the interactions between students and teachers. Children progress through the curriculum with continuous opportunities for academic enrichment, acceleration, and support.

Teachers facilitate understanding through a variety of settings, techniques, and heterogeneous grouping strategies. They encourage each child's achievement of education goals through student-directed learning. In developmentally appropriate programs, students are flexibly grouped to promote individual understanding, not tracked on the basis of perceived ability. Students may be organized in mixed-age learning groups based on developmental stages rather than discrete grade levels.

Assessment

Developmentally appropriate assessment measures understanding while encouraging thinking. It is performance-based and meaningful. Assessment is closely linked with curriculum and instruction. It is not used to exclude children from education programs and opportunities. Individual, cultural, and linguistic diversity is supported in the assessment process. Student achievement is reflected through a variety of measures and ongoing activities. Early childhood and elementary assessment charts student progress and program improvement across a wide range of skills and knowledge.

The primary purpose of assessment is to inform educators, students, and families about the progress students are making toward early childhood and elementary education goals. Developmentally appropriate assessment provides educators information they need to tailor classroom practice around individual student strengths and needs. It facilitates the partnership between educators and families by focusing on the academic and personal growth of students.

Assessment also provides indicators of program accountability. Developmentally appropriate assessment communicates progress toward state accountability standards through an evaluation of all early childhood and elementary program components – multiple measures of student performance, levels of teacher preparation, and indicators of parent involvement. Program evaluation in these settings is based upon samples of student performance rather than universally-administered, norm-referenced tests.

Professional Staffing and Development

Educators working with young children are prepared to make the mission and philosophy of early childhood and elementary education in Texas a reality. Early childhood and elementary educators are able to address the age-appropriate developmental stages of children through the completion of a preparation program that includes a strong foundation in the liberal arts and a study of pedagogy that is integrated with a knowledge of child development. They are fully remunerated for their training, credentials, and experience. Opportunities for professional development abound in all ongoing and planned activities of teachers, administrators, counselors, and support staff. Professional development is campus-based and focused on student learning.

Early childhood and elementary educators actively participate in decisions that affect the performance of their students, campuses, and districts. They are supported through pupil-staff ratios that are predicated upon the needs of children and developmentally appropriate instructional practices. Educators in early childhood and elementary programs actively participate in the development of curriculum and instructional materials to assure that each child achieves the goals of early childhood and elementary education.

Family and Community Collaboration

A child's optimal learning and personal growth depend upon security and guidance within the family; good health and nutrition; and high levels of collaboration between home, school, and community. Parent and family involvement in education is essential to the intellectual growth and academic achievement of their children. It is also critical to the success of early childhood and elementary education programs. Educators develop successful programs by responding to the changing needs of the communities they serve. They provide leadership to their communities by enabling parent and family involvement in education. Educators in developmentally appropriate programs work with parents and families to establish partnerships that support children's learning and strengthen the performance of their schools.

Educators and early care administrators and providers work together to provide a seamless transition between the private, state, and federal systems of early childhood care and education and elementary school programs. They coordinate resources to address the needs of young children and their families with developmentally appropriate programs and seek to integrate, to the greatest extent possible, early childhood care and education programs, staff, and program sites. Articulation between early childhood programs and services accommodates cultural and linguistic diversity.

The focus on child development that is central to the mission and philosophy of early childhood and elementary education in Texas is inextricably linked to the health and well-being of the children and families. At the state level, educators, service providers, and policy makers work together to support the academic and personal growth of children and the health and well-being of their families. In communities, schools serving early childhood- and elementary-aged children are part of a network that involves health and human service agencies, child care providers, parent education organizations, cultural institutions, and local businesses working together to achieve the goals of early childhood and elementary education.

Q & A:
Developmentally Appropriate Education

What is "developmentally appropriate education"?

- Developmentally appropriate education focuses on how children learn and is geared to the stages of children's development.

- Developmentally appropriate education does not result in the lowering of expectations; it adheres to high standards of academic and personal performance.

- There are four dimensions of developmentally appropriate education:
  - It is age appropriate – focusing on the ways children grow and develop.
  - It is individually appropriate – fostering individual students' interests and understanding.
  - It is culturally and linguistically appropriate – valuing the rich variety of languages and learning experiences children bring with them to the classroom.
  - It supports the social nature of learning – providing abundant opportunities for teacher and student interaction.

Isn't current educational practice "developmentally appropriate"?

Many formal teaching techniques used in early childhood and elementary classrooms are inappropriate for young children. For example:

- Children who are not deemed to be "ready" for kindergarten or first grade may be kept out of the grade, or placed in extra-year transitional programs.

- As many as 10 percent of Texas first graders are retained every year.

- Many schools "push" the elementary curriculum down to the early childhood and primary levels to prepare young children for tests they will face in later years.

- Large group teacher-directed activities dominate early grade classrooms in many districts.

- Schools are pressured to resort to rote drill and remediation methods that yield quick results on standardized tests.

Is there only one right way to implement developmentally appropriate programs?

☐ No! Developmentally appropriate education is not a rigid set of mandates that dictate practice but a philosophy for working with children.

☐ Because developmentally appropriate classrooms are not only age appropriate but also individually appropriate, they will not all look alike.

How are developmentally appropriate classrooms organized?

☐ Classroom organization is based on the following principles of learning.

- Predictable sequences of growth and change occur in all children; each child's growth and development varies within these sequences over time.
- All children come to school with some knowledge of the world around them.
- Children like to seek solutions to concrete problems.
- Children develop understanding about themselves, others, and their environment through active learning experiences, observation, and interaction with their peers, teachers, and other adults.
- All children can achieve state and local performance expectations.

☐ Developmentally appropriate classrooms can address these principles through the establishment of:

- heterogeneous, flexible instructional groups;
- learning centers;
- multiage grouping;
- thematic units within an interdisciplinary curriculum; and
- cooperative learning.

What is the role of the teacher?

☐ Teachers bring knowledge of teaching, child development, and how children learn into their classrooms.

☐ Teachers know that children build meaning by exploring and understanding their physical, social, and academic environments.

☐ Teachers combine instructional methods to engage children in active, enriched, and multifaceted learning environments.

☐ Teachers initiate learning activities, but also respond to children's initiatives.

Is developmentally appropriate curriculum watered down?

- ☐ No! Developmentally appropriate curriculum emphasizes active learning and in-depth understanding. It is focused on how young children learn and provides each child with rigorous, high-quality opportunities to acquire knowledge within specific subjects and across subject boundaries.

- ☐ Curriculum threads subject-specific and interdisciplinary knowledge into a fabric that supports continuous student progress toward rigorous standards and academic goals.

- ☐ Children take an active role in the exploration of content areas. They participate in the design and delivery of the curriculum.

- ☐ Children are immersed in educational experiences that build understanding rather than focus on coverage of isolated skills.

Do developmentally appropriate programs have rigorous academic expectations?

- ☐ Yes! Developmentally appropriate programs provide a solid academic foundation with high expectations for every child.

- ☐ All children move toward rigorous academic and personal goals within age and individually appropriate classrooms.

- ☐ Learning environments are designed to support each child's interests and understanding and his or her development of critical thinking and problem solving skills.

Are developmentally appropriate programs suitable for only certain kinds of children?

- ☐ No! Developmentally appropriate programs address each child's individual needs, interests, language, culture, style, and pace of learning.

- ☐ They build upon student strengths rather than fit each child into rigid, predesigned programs.

Is there retention or social promotion in these programs?

- No! Children are not retained in developmentally appropriate programs – research consistently shows that retention harms academic achievement and self-esteem.
- Developmentally appropriate programs focus on prevention - educators and families use a range of programs and services to prevent grade failure, including enhanced instruction, heterogeneous grouping, varying student-teacher ratios, and flexible school calendars to provide students opportunities to progress through the programs without falling behind their peers.
- School-wide planning, student support, and the implementation of a continuous progress curriculum create an atmosphere of high expectations and eliminate the need for social promotion.

What is "mastery" in developmentally appropriate early childhood and elementary programs?

- "Mastery" does not refer to the acquisition of isolated skills. It describes the entire process by which a student develops understanding of a concept, explores it through various activities, creates knowledge by connecting that understanding to other subject areas, and applies knowledge to solve problems.
- Developmentally appropriate curriculum focuses on the acquisition of knowledge over the long term. Essential skills are emphasized in the short term in order to facilitate understanding and problem solving. Mastery is not viewed in terms of individual lessons or daily learning activities, but as a standard of academic progress matched to stages of human development.

Why is reading important in the task force's vision of early childhood and elementary education?

- One in four Texas adults performs at the lowest literacy levels; the state ranks below the national average in adult literacy.
- Research shows that children who do not develop proficiency in reading in the primary grades are seriously at risk of school failure.
- Academic success depends upon being able to read, write, and communicate effectively. The three skills are essential components of literacy, a prerequisite to full participation in school and community. While development of the oral skills – speaking and listening – begin at birth and writing skills are honed over a number of years, reading requires focused

development early in a child's formal education.

- An extensive body of research indicates that effective early literacy programs incorporate explicit and systematic instruction in phonemic awareness (the ability to detect sounds within spoken words) and knowledge of alphabetic principles (the ability to relate letters to the sounds they symbolize) within meaning-based, literature- and language-rich learning environments.

Is student assessment a part of developmentally appropriate programs?

- Ongoing student assessment helps individualize instruction and is an integral part of developmentally appropriate programs.
- Assessment results are used to inform educators and families of student progress and program effectiveness.
- Programs use multiple, performance-based measures and informal teacher and parent observations rather than a single test score to evaluate children's growth and development.
- Assessment monitors student progress on established performance standards.

What relationship do parents and families have with schools implementing developmentally appropriate programs?

- Parent and family involvement is more critical to a child's educational success during the early childhood and elementary years than at any other time; it is pivotal to the success of these programs.
- Developmentally appropriate programs actively involve and support parents as partners in the educational development and personal growth of children.

Report of the Task Force on Early Childhood and Elementary Education

Executive Summary

The Task Force on Early Childhood and Elementary Education was created by the State Board of Education in January 1993. The board directed the task force to:

- ☐ examine the condition of the state's children between birth and entrance into middle school;
- ☐ develop a policy that guarantees a high quality, integrated system of early childhood and elementary education in Texas; and
- ☐ formulate recommendations for implementing the policy goals.

The task force defined early childhood education programs as those serving children in early care, prekindergarten, and the primary grade levels. Elementary education programs extend from primary until entrance into middle school.

The 37 members of the task force included members of the State Board of Education, teachers, counselors, principals, administrators, members of local school boards, representatives of state government, and appointees from organizations representing parents, early care and education providers, higher education faculty, and the business community. Through its review of research, consideration of expert presentations, discussions with educators, and participation in public hearings across the state, the task force has developed a framework for a new system of early childhood and elementary education, one that is focused on how children learn and characterized by collaboration and mutual effort toward achieving challenging and highly valued goals.

The Need for Change

The task force found that the current system of early childhood and elementary education is struggling to meet the challenges of childhood in today's Texas. The population served by today's schools has undergone dramatic change. The task force calls on schools to reconfigure themselves to keep pace with the changing needs of students and communities, or risk becoming irrelevant and outdated institutions.

Statistics bear out the need for a different vision of schooling. The 1.74 million children in Texas below six years of age, constituting 10 percent of the state's population, are most vulnerable to the social and economic changes sweeping the state. As many as 60 percent of today's preschool children have mothers in the work force. The percentage of poor children increased 28.3 percent over the last decade in Texas, more than twice the rate of increase in the United States as a whole. Today, one in four Texas children under the age of 18 lives in poverty, and poverty rates are almost twice as high for African-American and Hispanic children. As many as 15 percent of Texas infants face potential developmental delays, mostly because their mothers received little or no prenatal care. With only 30 percent of preschool-aged children receiving all of their im-

Texas Children at a Glance

During the 1992-93 school year, 2,075,261 Texas children were served in grades PK through six, 58.7% of the state's total student enrollment of 3,535,742. Figure 1 shows the ethnic representation of Texas early childhood and elementary students. Of these students, 50.9% were categorized as economically disadvantaged.

Figure 1. Grades PK–6 Enrollment by Ethnicity (1992-93)

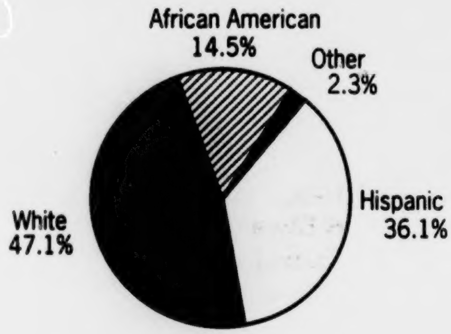
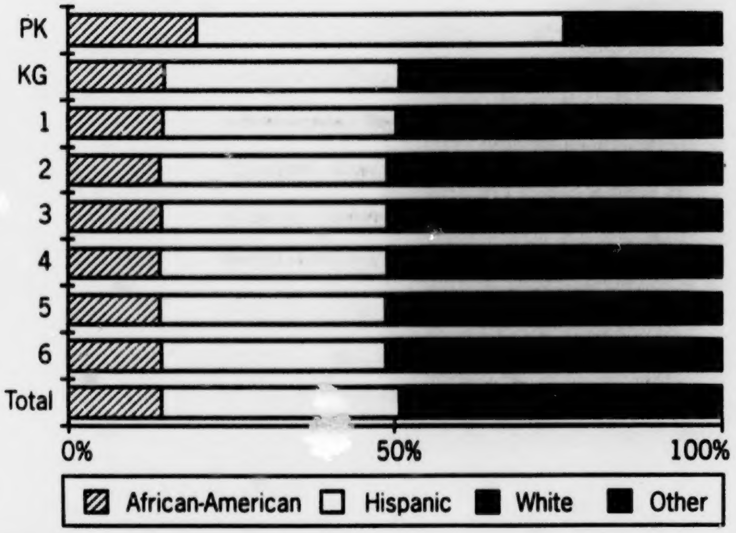


Figure 2. Percentages of Ethnicity in Grades PK–6 Enrollment (1992-93)



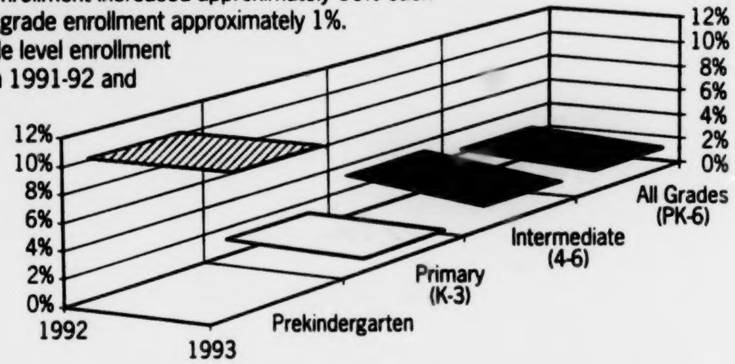
The prekindergarten and kindergarten grades have higher-than-average concentrations of minority students. Statutory requirements for prekindergarten programs stipulate that limited English proficient (LEP) and/or economically disadvantaged students are to be identified and served.

munizations, Texas has the worst immunization rate in the country, lower than many third world countries.

Schools are impacted profoundly by these statistics. Educators and policy makers are called upon to respond to demographic change, as successfully completing an education is a child's best hope for a better future. In addition to demographic change, the task of education is complicated by the fact that children first enter school at various ages and with widely different educational experiences. Most children enter public school when they are between five and six years of age, but some start the process of schooling much earlier. About 96,000 three- and four-year-olds attend prekindergarten in public schools, half-day programs intended to boost the school preparedness of economically disadvantaged children and those whose home language is other than English. Another 5,300 children three years of age and younger are served in Texas public

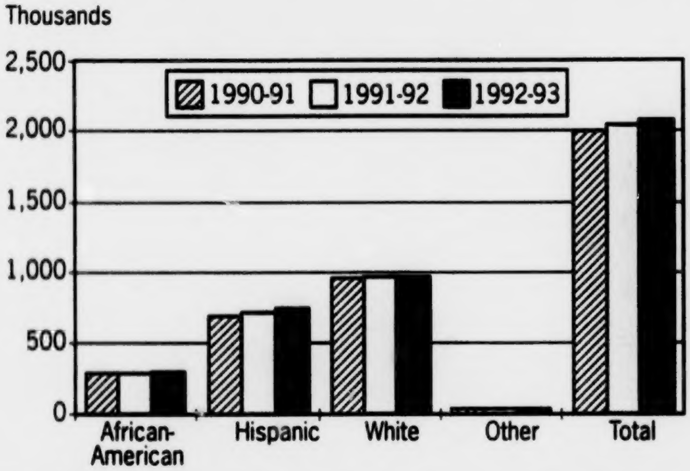
Growth in Enrollment

Figure 3. Year-to-Year Percent Change in Grade Level Enrollment from 1990-91 to 1992-93



Prekindergarten enrollment increased approximately 10% each year and primary grade enrollment approximately 1%. Intermediate grade level enrollment increased 3.1% in 1991-92 and 1.8% in 1992-93. Overall, early childhood and elementary enrollment increased approximately 2% each year.

Figure 4. Growth in Grades PK-6 Enrollment: 1990-91 - 1992-93



Students categorized as "Other", comprising Native Americans and Asians/Pacific Islanders, are the fastest growing population group, increasing at a rate of 7.9% in 1992-93. The number of Hispanic students grew at 3.9%, African-Americans at 1.6%, and white students at 0.1%.

schools annually under special education arrangements designed to ameliorate developmental handicaps. Other children come to public schools from early care and education programs that vary widely in quality, management style, and philosophy of child development.

Too often, today's public schools take this diverse and changing group of children and attempt to fit them into an organizational structure that is more than two generations old. In this structure, students who do not perform according to group norms are tracked into low ability academic groups. Students who do not attain established standards of performance within nine months are either placed in transitional classes or retained in grade, practices which research increasingly indicts as leading predictors of dropping out of school. Students are retained in disproportionate numbers at the end of first grade. Almost 27,000 Texas first graders were retained at the end of the 1991-92 school year. This first-grade retention rate of 10.3 percent is twice the overall retention rate of 5.2 percent.

In many cases, schools have responded to calls for change issued at the local, state, and federal levels by implementing practices that hinder, rather than support, children's educational success. As lawmaking bodies tie accountability to student performance on standardized tests, many schools resort to rote drill and remediation methods that yield quick results on those tests. In an attempt to cover the state curriculum and prepare students in the lower grades for the tests they will face in later years, schools "push" the elementary curriculum down to the early childhood and primary levels. During their visits to schools across the state, task force members met with educators and parents who strongly objected to the practice of subjecting young children to standardized testing, yet knew of few alternatives for monitoring student progress toward educational goals.

In an effort to address the issues of diversity, retention, inappropriate curriculum and assessment, and the changing nature of schooling, the task force has articulated a new vision of early childhood and elementary education, based on developmentally appropriate educational practices. The task force defines **developmentally appropriate early childhood and elementary education** as programs and practices that:

- ☐ focus on the principles and stages of child development;
- ☐ foster individual interests and understanding;

THE OLD SYSTEM	THE NEW VISION
Children adapt to a pre-organized school structure.	Schools are organized to accommodate active student involvement in learning.
Learning occurs in distinct, nine-month intervals; students not meeting expectations are remediated and/or retained.	A flexible calendar offers abundant time for acceleration and enrichment; early prevention and intervention ensure that children are not allowed to fall behind from the beginning.
Learning is organized and regulated in terms of seat time.	Curriculum allows for continuous progress; content meets rigorous standards; it is relevant, engaging, and meaningful to children.
Teachers impart knowledge through lecture.	Educators facilitate learning, organizing learning around student experiences, strengths, and educational goals.
Grouping is by ability or age.	Flexible grouping occurs across age, ability and achievement levels; teachers reconfigure groups based on learning needs.
Evaluation of student and school performance are based solely on standardized test results.	Evaluation is continuous, using multiple performance-based assessments to inform instruction and evaluate programs.
Education system is separate from other community systems and services.	Education system collaborates with other community systems and services to serve all children and their families.

- value cultural and linguistic diversity; and
- recognize the social nature of learning.

Developmentally appropriate practices are based upon the principle that children construct knowledge from active experience with their physical and social environments. They are built on a vision of education that ensures that every child will be prepared for future academic and personal success through a strong foundation in reading and mastery of educational goals. They expand opportunities for learning by accommodating each child's culture, language, and learning style.

By calling for change, the task force seeks to instill a new energy in the hearts and minds of all Texans who hold a stake in early childhood and elementary education. Specifically, our vision for the reorganized early childhood or elementary school in Texas includes the following components.

- **Developmentally appropriate curriculum** which uses flexible grouping of students on a continuous basis for active, participatory involvement and presentation of knowledge through interdisciplinary themes and units.
- **School calendars** which permit flexible and extended-year schedules to accommodate each child's learning style and pace.
- **Abundant opportunities** for each child to attain high standards of achievement through acceleration and enrichment of all learning activities on a continuous basis.
- **Performance-based assessments** that demonstrate continuous student progress toward academic standard, and allow continuous movement through the system by the students upon attainment of benchmark standards.

The new vision for early childhood and elementary education calls for high levels of collaboration. Implementation of the vision will occur when:

- the education community convinces the public of the need to change the system which has served generations of Americans, in order to prepare the newest generation for the challenges of the coming century;
- all stakeholders buy into the fact that the rules and settings of the educational system have changed and what occurs in schools can no longer be "business as usual;"
- educators are trained in child development, diverse learning styles, developmentally appropriate teaching strategies, mixed-age grouping, alternative assessment procedures, and effective parent and family involvement;
- educators form partnerships and work closely with parents and families, community members, care givers, social service providers, and business people, to support successful educational experiences for every child; and
- site-based management teams at the campus and district levels take charge of the form and direction of their restructured schools.

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

To achieve this new vision, the Task Force on Early Childhood and Elementary Education recommends the following strategies for the implementation of developmentally appropriate early childhood and elementary programs in Texas:

- ☐ Nurture the full intellectual, physical, social, and emotional growth of each child. Recognize that each child's growth occurs over developmental stages, tempered by a learning style and pace that is individually unique.
- ☐ Provide developmentally appropriate curriculum that is age-appropriate, interdisciplinary, enriched to support each child's academic and personal growth, and connected to clearly articulated state and local educational goals.
- ☐ Support educational success with a firm foundation in reading. Assure that reading instruction is age- and individually appropriate and supports the complex interactions between reader and text. Structure the reading curriculum to provide explicit and systematic integration of phonemic awareness training and understanding of alphabetic principles within meaning-based literature- and language-rich learning environments.
- ☐ Group students flexibly to support individual learning needs. Do not use past academic performance or perceived ability to track students.
- ☐ Eliminate retention. Employ curriculum, instructional practices, and schedules and calendars that overcome the need to retain students in grade.
- ☐ Provide a flexible, seamless learning continuum from prekindergarten to grade 12.
- ☐ Implement performance-based assessment strategies that adhere to developmentally appropriate principles of curriculum and instruction.
- ☐ Prepare early childhood and elementary educators with programs that integrate knowledge of pedagogy and child development.
- ☐ Support early childhood and elementary educators and students with student-staff ratios that are predicated upon the developmental needs of children.
- ☐ Actively solicit meaningful parent and family participation in the education of their children.
- ☐ Coordinate early care programs, school- and community-based early childhood education programs, and elementary programs to assure a seamless transition between programs and continuous educational progress for each child.
- ☐ Establish partnerships with health and human service agencies, child care providers, community organizations, cultural institutions, and local businesses to meet a range of individual and community educational, health, and human services needs.

Mission and Philosophy

The mission of early childhood and elementary education in Texas is to nurture the intellectual, emotional, physical, and social growth of all children from birth to entrance into middle school. The goal is to assure all children access to a quality education program that allows them to achieve academic excellence and provides them with a foundation for full participation in society. Early childhood and elementary educators and care providers cultivate children's growth across the widest range of ages and developmental stages in the state's public education system. They work within an environment defined by the growth and development of children; changing family and community needs; and increasing emphasis on school accountability and calls for education reform.

Growth, change, accountability: to achieve the mission of early childhood and elementary education in such a dynamic environment, we must focus not only on how we teach young children, but on how they learn as well. The Task Force on Early Childhood and Elementary Education believes that children are active learners. They are not "empty vessels" waiting to be filled up with facts. Children construct knowledge. They build meaning through full participation in their classrooms and learning environments. The task force believes that developmentally appropriate education provides the best opportunities for educators, children, and families to achieve the goals of early childhood and elementary education.

The philosophy of developmentally appropriate education was first articulated by early childhood educators serving children from birth to age eight. The task force builds upon that original idea to cover all of the early childhood and elementary years. From the perspective of the task force, early childhood education programs serve children in early care, prekindergarten, and the primary grade levels. Elementary education programs extend from primary until entrance into middle school.

Children are at the center of developmentally appropriate education. In the early childhood and elementary education programs envisioned by the task force, young students are seen as growing individuals with developing abilities. There is no sacrifice of intellectual rigor or lowering of the expectations for academic growth or accomplishment. All of the resources of early childhood and elementary education – curriculum, instruction, assessment, school organization, and interaction with the community – support each child's active involvement in learning and full intellectual and personal development.

A developmentally appropriate approach to education changes the equations of traditional early childhood and elementary programs. A shift in focus from how we teach to how children learn changes the role of the teacher, the structure of the curriculum, and the nature of instruction in the early grades.

The Task Force on Early Childhood and Elementary Education identified four principles of developmentally appropriate education.

- ☐ It is age appropriate, focusing on how children grow and learn at different stages of development.
- ☐ It is individually appropriate, fostering individual student interests and understanding.
- ☐ It values cultural and linguistic diversity, using the languages, faces, and cultures

of our society to enrich understanding of ideas and connect curriculum to the communities outside school.

- ❑ It recognizes the social nature of learning, supporting a variety of teacher, student, and adult interaction in the acquisition and application of knowledge.

The boundaries of school have expanded as our families and communities have changed. Texas households and neighborhoods are more diverse.

Changing the Focus with Developmentally Appropriate Education

The Teacher Shifts

From ➨	To
directing instruction	facilitating in-depth understanding of complex subjects and multifaceted themes

Curriculum Shifts

From ➨	To
discrete subject areas	an integrated approach to knowledge that supports each student's continuous progress toward academic goals

Instruction Shifts

From ➨	To
mastery of isolated skills and matching students to curriculum	flexibly grouping students in ways that support long-term understanding, interest, and academic and personal growth

Children enter kindergarten and first grade with a wide range of previous education and care experiences. In the earliest years, child care and development marks the intersection of a number of federal, state, and private efforts to provide protection and enrichment for children. The goals of these programs vary. There is no greater level of complexity or need at any other level of the education system. Education reform efforts, both nationally and in Texas, have addressed the middle and high school years. Early childhood and elementary classrooms and care settings establish the foundation upon which the results of educational success and full contribution to family and society are built. The task force calls for a full commitment at the federal, state, and local levels to a child-centered system of education that provides each student with the pathways and guidance necessary to achieve the highest standards of academic and personal growth.

The mission of early childhood and elementary education expressed by the Task Force on Early Childhood and Elementary Education – nurturing the intellectual, social, physical, and emotional growth of all young children – is simple to understand but difficult to implement. The task force calls upon educators, families, and community members to create child-centered programs that combine expectations for academic excellence with respect for individual development. Through the discussion and recommendations for action presented in this report, the task force combines research, practice, and the ideas of Texas educators, parents, and concerned citizens to describe a system of early childhood and elementary education that meets state accountability requirements, fulfills community expectations, and has at its center the child.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING A DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PHILOSOPHY

For the Legislature:

1) Review, amend, and, as necessary, adopt legislation that provides all children with access to learning environments that are age-, individually-, culturally-, and linguistically-appropriate.

2) Extend the instructional calendar to assist educators in preventing school failure.

3) Provide state funds for full-day kindergarten.

For the State Board of Education:

1) Establish curriculum and expectations for education that engage students in learning and that support continuous progress of all students toward rigorous educational standards.

2) Develop systems that attract and retain trained and credentialed bilingual and early childhood educators.

For the Texas Education Agency:

1) Use the *Policy Statement on Early Childhood and Elementary Education* as a benchmark when identifying best practices and developing instructional frameworks, guidelines, and school-based initiatives in early childhood and elementary education.

For Regional Service Centers:

1) Use the *Policy Statement on Early Childhood and Elementary Education* to develop and implement technical assistance and professional development activities that support child-centered early childhood and elementary education programs.

For Districts and Campuses:

1) Implement the policy recommendations of the Task Force on Early Childhood and Elementary Education.

2) Establish and maintain high expectations for each child.

3) Fund and staff prekindergarten programs at a level that provides for full enrollment of all eligible three- and four-year old children.

4) Provide safe, stimulating early childhood and elementary learning environments that promote the intellectual, emotional, social, and physical growth of all children.

For Communities:

1) Support the intellectual, emotional, social, and physical growth of all children. Recognize the crucial importance of family and neighborhood involvement in each child's education, optimal growth, and development.

2) Prepare each child for academic, personal, and social success. Support each child's academic, personal, and social growth.

Organization, Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

ORGANIZATION

Real-world requirements are fueling demands to change the structure of Texas schools. The key responsibility of early childhood and elementary education programs is to establish the foundation that allows each child to reach their full educational and social potential. In *Smart Start: Elementary Education for the 21st Century,* authors Patte Barth and Ruth Mitchell state that schools must be designed so that children can learn, regardless of the background and experiences they bring with them through the classroom door. The task force calls for educators, parents, and community members to examine schools and care settings to assure that every child in Texas will have access to the opportunities that support high levels of academic success and personal growth.

Researchers decry the prevalent "factory model" of education which gives precedence to traditional forms of school organization over current student needs. The factory model requires students to "fit" patterns of school organization and instruction that are, in many cases, several generations old. Texas Commissioner of Education Lionel R. Meno has said repeatedly, "In today's schools, programs are negotiable; student achievement is not."

Developmentally appropriate education gives precedence to students. The organization of developmentally appropriate schools and classrooms is child-centered: providing age-, individually, and culturally and linguistically appropriate classroom settings to ensure student progress toward rigorous expectations of performance. Educators in these programs focus resources and strategies on efforts to develop each student's potential, enhancing instruction and extending opportunities for learning in ways that encourage each student's continuous progress toward academic goals.

Developmentally appropriate instruction has sparked a renewed interest in heterogeneous mixed-age student grouping, particularly at the primary grade levels. The State Board of Education , in §75.141(a) of Title 19 of the *Texas Ad-*

Mixed-Age Grade Levels at Oak Forest Elementary in Houston ISD

Mixed-age heterogeneous classes are one means by which educators are implementing developmentally appropriate programs. In Oak Forest Elementary School in Houston ISD, primary level classes are organized into grade K–2 mixed-age groups. Each class is made up of approximately equal numbers of kindergarten, first, and second grade students. Entering kindergartners learn, grow, and know the same teacher throughout their primary years. Over time, they assume the roles of learner — working in a variety of instructional settings — and leader — setting an example for the youngest students in the class.

Reorganizing grade levels into mixed-age classes is a key element in many developmentally appropriate restructuring efforts. It is not enough by itself, however, to assure success for all students. Grade-level reorganization must be supported by curricular and instructional reform to enrich and enhance all children's educational experiences.

ministrative Code, encourages districts to implement mixed-age primary classrooms.

The task force is convinced that child-centered programs must be developed at the campus level, with organizational arrangements, curriculum, and instruction that meets community expectations as well as state standards of performance.

On some campuses, this may mean extended-day tutorials, drawing upon family members, members of the community, and students from neighboring middle and high schools. Some campuses may use school- and community-based technologies to support the implementation of extended-day tutorial programs. Community access cable television and telephone homework "hotlines" may provide better information to families and tutors of students needing extra support.

Year-Round at Roquemore

Roquemore Elementary School in Arlington ISD is a school running on two schedules: the traditional nine-month calendar and a calendar for year-round education.

Year-round education at Roquemore costs more — as much as $30,000 more per year. But educators at the school point to increasing benefits: higher student achievement and lower rates of retention. Successful implementation of year-round education at Roquemore has hinged on three critical elements:

- ☐ Choice: Parents and teachers can choose between the year-round and the traditional calendar.
- ☐ Belief in the concept: Educators participating in the year-round school believe in its benefits and actively market the concept to the community.
- ☐ Community service support: Child care and related activities are provided by such community agencies as the YMCA and the Boys and Girls Club of Arlington before and after school and during the intercession periods.

Some campuses may take advantage of newly added sections 21.562 and 21.563 of the *Texas Education Code* to implement extended year programs. Some school districts and campuses may follow the steps of Ysleta ISD, implementing year-round education with tutorials offered during the intercession periods.

The task force recognizes the size and complexity of this challenge to campus educators and calls for state, regional, and district educators to create frameworks to assist campuses in creating developmentally appropriate classrooms.

Extending Learning

Site-based education to meet local needs will involve the development of curriculum and instruction that is focused on depth of understanding rather than broadly-stroked coverage of content, and organizational strategies that provide each student opportunities for continuous academic progress based on the acquisition of knowledge and demonstration of mastery of broad curricular goals. The task force believes that all students should be challenged academically: no student should be prevented by grade-level expectations or age from forging ahead in the curriculum.

At the same time, educators need to assure that children in need have adequate support in their academic progress. The task force recognizes that important elements of this support are full-day kindergarten programs and funding at a level that ensures the state prekindergarten program reaches all eligible students. Currently, state funding supports half-day kindergarten programs. Local districts have the option to extend kindergarten to a full-day program using local funds. Educators in Arlington, Corpus Christi, and

Tyler ISD's told the task force that state-funded full day kindergarten programs are essential – to increase student academic and personal growth by exposure to the curriculum and by giving kindergarten teachers more time to teach and support kindergarten children. In Humble ISD, the task force was told that a kindergarten teacher teaching two half-day sessions taught more content per day than high school teachers with five separate classes.

Staffing Patterns

In many cases, improving student–teacher ratios may hold the key to educational success for all students. The task force strongly urges Texas lawmakers and educators to fully implement a student–teacher ratio of 22–1 at all elementary grade levels. Although Texas' mandated student–teacher ratio of 22–1 is among the lowest in the nation, the quality of education provided by increased student–teacher contact is continually imperiled by the ever-increasing pressure to stretch state and local education budgets. In each session of the Texas Legislature, the 22–1 ratio comes under attack. It is a frequent target in requests for waivers from education mandates by campuses and districts.

State Board of Education rules call for prekindergarten student–staff ratios of 18–1 for four-year-olds and 15–1 for three-year-olds. The ratio requirements, found in Title 19, *Texas Administrative Code*, §75.141, will become effective September 1, 1994. The rules allow for as many as 22 students in prekindergarten classrooms if additional staff are added. Corpus Christi ISD educators told the task force that these ratios are too high to fully provide developmentally appropriate educational practices: they recommended a ratio of 10–1, with no more than 20 children in a prekindergarten classroom. Houston ISD educators voiced similar concerns. They recommended a prekindergarten student–adult ratio of 22–2, with one of the adults a certified teacher and one a specially trained aide.

Researchers and policy makers recognize that lower student– teacher ratios are elements of pro-

Extended Year Programs
Focus on Eliminating Retention

In 1993, the Texas Legislature created two options for districts to address the needs of students at risk of failure.

OPTION I: A state-funded optional extended year program authorized by *Texas Education Code* §21.562.

- ☐ The program serves children in grades K–8 who would otherwise be retained.
- ☐ The program is not to exceed 30 days.
- ☐ It allows a maximum student–teacher ratio of 12–1.
- ☐ It requires special training of teachers.
- ☐ Any decision not to promote a student enrolled in the program must be made by the parent. If a parent requests retention, the principal is required to hold a meeting between the parent, principal, extended year teacher, and counselor at which the educators explain the harmful effects of retention on academic achievement, likelihood of dropping out of school, and self-esteem.
- ☐ Any school district implementing the program is to adopt a policy designed to lead to the immediate reduction and, ultimately, elimination of retention as an instructional practice.

OPTION II: A locally funded extended year program authorized by *Texas Education Code* §21.563.

- ☐ Districts choosing this option can fund the program by shortening the regular instructional year by as many as five days.
- ☐ The program is not to exceed 45 days.

grams that help prevent school failure. The extended-year pilot programs passed in the 73rd session of the Texas legislature call for a ratio of 12-1 in instructional programs specially designed to prevent school failure. To enrich and enhance instruction for all students, the task force urges educators and policy makers to implement a student-adult ratio of 22-2 throughout the prekindergarten and primary grade levels. This configuration would involve one certified teacher and one specially trained aide in each class serving prekindergarten through second grade students. To enhance the professionalism of the aide position, the task force believes this training should be based on the performance expectations of the Child Development Associate credential, a degree discussed in more detail in the Professional Development and Training section of this report. The task force calls for the extra position to be paid through average daily attendance allotments from the Foundation School Program by increasing the funding weight for students in prekindergarten through grade 2.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STAFFING

For the Legislature:

1) Extend the 22-1 student-teacher ratio through grade five.
2) Increase the funding weight for students in prekindergarten through grade 3. Fund the increased weight through ADA allotments from the Foundation School Program. Use the increased funding to lower the 22-1 student-adult ratio in early childhood and primary programs to 22-2. One of the adults counted in this ratio must be a certified teacher.

For School Districts and Campuses:

3) Provide training to adults working with certified teachers within early childhood and elementary classrooms affected by the 22-2 ratio. Base that training on the competencies included in the Child Development Associate credential.

CURRICULUM

Children seek to understand and make sense of their surroundings. In homes, schools, and playgrounds each day our conversations with children are punctuated with the words "why?" and "how?". Children explore and inquire: they seek connections to a complex and interrelated world. Early childhood and elementary curriculum affords children pathways to knowledge and understanding. It provides guideposts for each child's progress toward educational goals. According to John Goodlad and Robert Anderson, curriculum is the center of a school's program for learning. It is the way in which the school fulfills its responsibilities to the child.

In *The Care and Education of America's Young Children*, Lillian Katz writes that curriculum addresses the critical questions of how, what, and when children learn. It articulates the skills, concepts, and knowledge that all children acquire in developmentally appropriate early childhood and elementary programs. Too often, in traditional early childhood and elementary configurations, skills, concepts, and knowledge are viewed as variables in the process of education. Instructional methods, units, and children's abilities are viewed as constants. The result is that children are matched to a particular level of the curriculum and taught through a fixed mode of instruction. In the child-centered configurations recommended by the task force, the skills, concepts, and knowledge embodied in the curriculum are the constants. Educational variables are children's abilities, which develop over time, and the instructional methods and units deployed to promote high levels of understanding for all students.

All children come to school with knowledge, skills, and attitudes learned from their experiences and interactions with their families and communities. The curriculum in developmentally appropriate programs combines the knowledge and experiences children bring to school with rich, meaningful content to create an atmosphere of high expectations for every child. The content of developmentally appropriate curriculum is not diluted for any group of students. It is challenging, engaging, and focused on each child's full academic and personal growth.

Educators and researchers seeking to implement developmentally appropriate practices level four criticisms at much of the curriculum currently used in early childhood and elementary programs. The first criticism focuses on what is perceived to be a piecemeal approach to curriculum development, leading to the disconnection of one subject from another. Second, these educators and researchers say that current early childhood and elementary curriculum emphasizes the acquisition of skills over development of understanding. Their third criticism focuses on the tendency to "push down" curriculum and practices from the later elementary grades into the early primary levels. Fourth, they criticize the curriculum for treating children as passive, rather than active, learners.

These critics contend that a great deal of current early childhood and elementary curriculum lacks a proper focus. Rather than addressing how children learn and understand the world around them, they say that curriculum is developed in response to pressures to provide coverage over content and to enhance performance on standardized tests. The curriculum is faulted for presenting skills in a series of isolated units. The units may have a direct correspondence to the items highlighted in standardized tests; the result of such a curriculum structure, however, is the separation of the skills from the subject areas in which they are to be applied. In the primary curriculum, the emphasis on mastering skills takes increasing precedence over the facilitation of children's understanding and development as high stakes accountability measures move down into earlier grade levels. Finally, critics of the present curriculum state that rather than creating a complex and interdisciplinary environment that supports children's pursuit of knowledge through a variety of concrete and multifaceted learning opportunities, the curriculum views thinking itself as a skill to be taught to students after the successful completion of a series of prerequisites.

Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum

The task force supports a different view of curriculum, one in which skills are directly tied to content, understanding is emphasized over coverage, and children are active participants in learning. Educators in Humble ISD told the task force that developmentally appropriate curriculum is interdisciplinary, integrated, and addresses the whole child. There are three components to the view of curriculum advocated by the task force: it is based upon a school-wide, longitudinal view of student learning; it provides an integrated approach to knowledge without sacrificing the integrity of specific subject areas; and it is directly tied to the experiences and interests of young learners. In the task force's view, curriculum is dynamic – changing as children learn and as educators gain and apply new knowledge about children's learning.

A longitudinal, school-wide view of the curriculum looks at children's growth, development, and progress toward educational goals over the course of their early childhood and elementary school years. It is not defined by a series of thresholds that can only be crossed after a series of skills are mastered; it need not be limited to iteration of units within a particular grade. Fundamental to the development of a longitudinal view of the curriculum is the articulation of the essential skills, concepts, and knowledge that every student is expected to attain over the course of early childhood and elementary education. These skills, concepts, and knowledge are the organizing elements of a school's curriculum. They form a continuum that charts a path toward educational goals and make up the sequence of learning opportunities that guide students through the school.

John Goodlad and Robert Anderson state that a longitudinal view of the curriculum is based on the alignment of three factors: the skills, concepts, and knowledge articulated in the learning continuum; the range of development and achievement among students; and the grade-level organization of the school. Critical to the implementation of a school- wide view of curriculum is the school faculty's development of a common view of the content and concepts that introduce and guide the sequence of student learning. Goodlad and Anderson state that this common view of the "what," "how," and "when" of learning leads to a picture of the school as a series of related parts, with each subject area and grade level dependent upon the other, instead of a number of isolated, mutually exclusive cells.

This school-wide perspective supports a continuous progress view of early childhood and elementary curriculum. A continuous progress curriculum is tied to student achievement, not grade levels or seat time. Students progress through the curriculum as they achieve the skills, concepts, and knowledge articulated in the school's sequence of learning. A continuous progress perspective of student progress does not view a child's development or ability as fixed in time or constant from one subject area to the next. This recognition of variations in children's accomplishment and rates of development does not result in different expectations of success for different groups of students. A school-wide continuous progress curriculum allows children the room, time, and enrichment opportunities needed to achieve the early childhood and elementary goals.

In 1993, the Texas legislature added §21.1011 to the *Texas Education Code*, directing the State Board of Education to establish a curriculum that allows each student to progress through school at a continuous rate. The law specifically states that students in need will be provided support to maintain continuous progress through the curriculum. The task force supports this legislation and urges state and local boards of education to develop continuous progress plans to fully implement this section of the law.

Integrated Curriculum Promotes Academic and Personal Growth

An integrated approach to knowledge is the second component of the curriculum advocated by the task force. In this approach, subject areas are integrated to create a meaningful context of instruction. Essential skills are not ends in themselves. They are the tools that students use to enhance understanding. A dichotomy exists between traditional curriculum, in which subject areas are separated from each other, and the world outside school, in which the challenges and tasks children face are multifaceted, requiring the integration of subject-area information, knowledge, and prior experience. Even the youngest child engages in this process of assimilation and thought. The task force believes it is imperative to support children's learning with curriculum that is complex and multidimensional, packed with extensive opportunities to not only achieve skills, but to apply them toward the acquisition of knowledge.

Educators can achieve subject-area integration by establishing broad themes of study. These themes are not "extras" used only at special times during the school year. They are essentials in a curriculum that is geared to the ways in which children think and learn. Thematic instruction does not sacrifice subject-area integrity, however. Each subject taught in early childhood and elementary classrooms has its own structure and internal characteristics. Subject-area knowledge informs the development of school-wide indicators of student progress and establishes themes of study.

Integrated Curriculum in Early Childhood Education

The task force applauds Texas early childhood educators and the State Board of Education for recognizing the importance of integrated learning in prekindergarten and kindergarten. The board approved, in November 1991, the restructuring of the state's essential elements of learning to address the development and growth of young children. Educators and policy makers on the Prekindergarten and Kindergarten Essential Elements Advisory Committee developed essential elements that are centered on developmental domains rather than discrete skills and isolated subject areas. Although the new curriculum will not become effective until September 1995, many school districts across the state are already implementing it in their prekindergarten and kinder-

Articulating Developmental Domains in the Early Childhood Curriculum

FROM	TO
English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies	Intellectual Development
Physical Education	Physical Development
Fine Arts	Aesthetic Development
	Socio-Emotional Development

garten classrooms. The task force supports the restructuring of the prekindergarten and kindergarten curriculum and strongly recommends that it be expanded to cover all of the primary years.

Core Subjects in the Integrated Curriculum

In each of the core subject areas, the curriculum advocated by the task force allows children to develop understanding through the application of skills and learning to open-ended, meaningful, and challenging situations. *Everybody Counts: A Report on the Future of Mathematics* emphasizes the need to develop an early childhood and elementary mathematics curriculum that moves children beyond rote mastery of computational skills to the use of mathematics as a way of figuring out the world around them. The focus of the curriculum endorsed in this report is not only on *how* to estimate and calculate, but *when* and with *which* method.

In science and in social studies, the curriculum advocated by the task force focuses not solely on facts and dates, but on the relationships of individuals to the whole; methods of collecting and collating data; and ways of acquiring and synthesizing knowledge to develop and test hypotheses. Traditionally, science and social studies curriculum leads children through ever-widening concentric circles of family, home, neighborhood, environment, state, country, and the world. This sequence, by ignoring the numerous ways in which all of these spheres interact and impact children each day of their lives, impedes the broader application of these subject areas to real world experience and understanding.

"Specials" Bear Brunt of Budget and Organizational Constraints

In a developmentally appropriate curriculum, the "specials" — art, music, and physical education — provide children opportunities for learning and physical development and allow them greater access to a rich and diverse cultural heritage. Art is more than crafts, physical education engages the body and the mind well beyond the routines of recess, and music explores a rich tapestry of rhythm and tone. In the school-wide curriculum envisioned by the task force, the themes and activities explored in these areas add depth to the skills, concepts, and knowledge developed in the core subject areas.

At site visits and public hearings around the state, educators and parents voiced concern that both the integrity and vast potential of these subject areas were being too tightly constrained by limited budgets, state testing and accountability systems, and organizational considerations which combine children from more than one classroom in order to give core area teachers their essential — and mandated — individual planning periods.

In Tyler ISD, a university educator told the task force that today's students were "musically illiterate" and claimed that the fine arts curriculum had suffered profoundly since *A Nation At Risk* — emphasizing the need for more skill-oriented instruction — was published in the early 1980s.

A music teacher told the task force that she saw as many as 800 students in 30-minute periods scheduled over four days. She said that even the best-prepared music teacher could not make meaningful connections to students under such conditions.

Similar concerns of overcrowding and lack of emphasis were expressed by physical education teachers. In addition, educators in Corpus Christi, Dallas, and Ysleta ISD's told the task force that developmentally appropriate curriculum must focus on young children's motor development, building strength, balance, and coordination to enhance wellness and fitness of each child.

The task force believes that literacy – the ability to communicate and effectively use and understand written text – lays the foundation for future success in school and full participation in society. Robert Slavin, director of the early and elementary school program at the Center for Research on Effective Schooling for Disadvantaged Students at Johns Hopkins University, told the task force that performing below grade-level expectations in reading is the primary cause of retention in the early grades and, ultimately, for many children, dropping out of school.

Reading is a complex activity that is part of a child's natural language development. It requires effective communication skills and understanding of the sound-symbol relationships of the alphabet. Reading involves the interaction of the reader, the text, and the context in which something is read. Through its review of research and discussion with national experts and Texas educators, the task force concludes that effective reading programs integrate explicit knowledge of the sounds and structures of words, and understanding of the letters and sound-symbol relationships of the alphabet within language- and literature-rich learning environments.

Reading supports understanding of all subject areas. It is essential to knowledge. The integration of skill- and literature-based instruction allows all young children to manipulate sound and symbol and explore the rich themes and ideas that are inherent parts of our culture. The social nature of learning is enhanced in the classroom by providing children frequent opportunities to reflect, write, and discuss the ideas presented in reading instruction.

Individual Interest and Understanding

The third component of the curriculum advocated by the task force is the creation of strong ties between school-based learning and the experiences and interests of young learners. According to David Elkind, professor of child study at Tufts University, curriculum in developmentally appropriate programs is always open, flexible, and innovative. A school-wide curriculum that seeks to integrate skills and knowledge across subject areas and provide strong connections to the world outside school will not work if the interests and experiences of the children that bridge these two domains are ignored. In developmentally appropriate learning environments, educators and students construct the curriculum together. The task force believes that curriculum works best when it is connected to the neighborhood served by the school and is built upon children's interests and community resources.

In this view, the curriculum accommodates the linguistic diversity of the children in the classroom. The primary language that the child brings to school is valued, accepted, and used in learning basic concepts at the same time that the child acquires English. In stating this belief, however, the task force emphasizes that all children, regardless of their neighborhood, socioeconomic status, or home language, are expected to achieve the same standards of educational excellence within the early childhood and elementary curriculum.

The task force has but one purpose in recommending a developmentally appropriate early childhood and elementary curriculum: to emphasize not what is taught but what and how well students learn. The longitudinal view of learning, the integration of subjects and skills, and the connections to student interest and experience are all components of this model. It is this emphasis on learning that provides all children with the support and opportunities for understanding they need to achieve high levels of academic and personal success.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CURRICULUM

For the State Board of Education:

1) Amend rules to group prekindergarten through grade three essential elements under developmental domains rather than subject area headings.

2) Amend rules to restructure the early childhood and elementary essential elements to support continuous progress of students toward academic goals as specified in §21.1011 of the *Texas Education Code*, based on acquired skills, depth of understanding across subject areas, and demonstrated mastery.

3) Adopt early childhood and elementary learning systems and textbooks that encourage interdisciplinary and thematic instruction and ease campus implementation of mixed-age classrooms.

4) Adopt early childhood and elementary learning systems and textbooks that are culturally and linguistically diverse.

For the Texas Education Agency:

1) Develop frameworks for early childhood and elementary education that tie balanced, developmentally appropriate curriculum to current research on child development and developmentally appropriate classroom practices. Include in the frameworks support for continuous student progress and growth through subject-specific skills and interdisciplinary units and projects. Give priority to the development of frameworks at the prekindergarten and primary grades. Develop frameworks for a primary reading curriculum that integrates phonemic awareness and understanding of alphabetic principles within meaning-based literature- and language-rich learning environments.

2) Develop curriculum frameworks that value cultural and linguistic diversity.

3) Develop guidelines that ensure that all students, including those in categorical and specially-funded programs, have access to developmentally appropriate curriculum.

4) Provide flexibility in the district use of textbook funds to enable districts to support the purchase of experiential materials for early childhood programs.

For Regional Education Service Centers:

1) Provide technical assistance to schools and districts seeking to implement developmentally appropriate curriculum.

For School Districts:

1) Develop early childhood and elementary curriculum that is based on current research on learning and child development and geared to the goals of early childhood and elementary education. Organize the curriculum so that it focuses on student acquisition of subject and interdisciplinary knowledge. Structure it so that children can suggest curriculum content and the way it is implemented in the classroom.

2) Do not use past academic performance or prior demonstrations of ability to determine access to the curriculum. Develop curriculum that challenges all students and supports their continuous academic progress and acquisition of knowledge.

3) Ensure that all students, including special student populations and those served by categorically-funded programs, have access to developmentally appropriate, interdisciplinary curriculum.

4) Establish a district reading curriculum that is tied to long-term educational goals and

ensures that all students will attain high levels of achievement through success, confidence, and a firm foundation in reading. Structure the reading curriculum so that it supports complex interactions between reader and text in ways that are age- and individually appropriate. Provide explicit and systematic integration of phonemic awareness training and knowledge of alphabetic principles within literature- and language- rich learning environments.

For Campuses:

1) Develop and implement, through the campus planning process, curriculum that addresses community needs and goals and supports continuous student progress through the acquisition of subject-specific and interdisciplinary knowledge. Ensure that the curriculum encourages children to take an active role in the exploration of content and interdisciplinary learning.

2) Enable teachers, administrators, and support staff to participate in the development of curriculum goals, sequences, and materials.

3) Do not use past academic performance or prior demonstrations of ability to determine access to the curriculum. Develop curriculum that challenges all students and supports their continuous academic progress and acquisition of knowledge in all content areas.

4) Ensure that all students, including special student populations and those served by categorically-funded programs, have access to developmentally appropriate, interdisciplinary curriculum.

5) Assure student achievement and success with a curriculum that provides every child with a firm foundation in reading. Focus the reading curriculum on long-term educational goals. Structure reading instruction so that it supports complex interactions between reader and text in ways that are age- and individually appropriate. Build the reading curriculum upon pervasive opportunities to use and understand oral and written language in a variety of formats and situations; systematically impart phonemic awareness training and knowledge of alphabetic principles; connect reading instruction to literature- and language-rich learning environments in meaningful ways for all students.

6) Increase the quality and quantity of culturally and linguistically diverse materials in classrooms.

Child-Centered Instruction

Child-centered instruction focuses on children learning, not learning programs. Children acquire the skills, concepts, and knowledge that make up the curriculum through rich and varied interactions with teachers, peers, and materials. Instruction in child-centered early childhood and elementary programs engages each child in an active process of learning and understanding. Teachers prepare and organize developmentally appropriate classrooms to provide children with a range of high quality learning experiences, based on curricular goals, age-appropriate practices, children's interests, and instructional needs.

Both effective learning and effective instruction are achieved through deep understanding of the curriculum. The task force recommends that teachers participate in the design and implementation of the curriculum in their schools. Effective teachers, equipped with this understanding of curriculum and detailed knowledge of the children in their classrooms, are able to organize learning environments that provide children with a range of experiences and settings and support high levels of achievement for all students.

Active Learning and the Environment

Classroom arrangements and materials directly impact children's learning. In child-centered classrooms, space is aligned to children's interests and developmental levels. Developmentally appropriate classrooms are divided into distinct activity areas and centers. These arrangements provide adequate room for movement between centers, flexible small group instruction, and large group activities and projects. They also provide children with the opportunity to choose between a number of activities and tasks.

Instruction in these classrooms balances subject matter, interest, and student choice. Teachers in developmentally appropriate classrooms enhance instruction, varying their teaching to support the

Characteristics of Young Learners

☐ Young children are innately curious and will strive to learn.
☐ Playful activity is a natural way of learning.
☐ Young children learn by imitating, talking, and interacting with each other as well as with adults.
☐ Concrete and multisensory materials are children's tools for learning.
☐ Young children can simultaneously acquire knowledge and skills in many areas.
☐ Learning occurs at different rates.
☐ Real-life experiences related to the interests of children promote learning.
☐ Education impacts the "whole" child, and vice versa.
☐ Experiencing successes builds a sense of security and self-confidence.

Source: Program Advisory, *May 1991, Kentucky Department of Education.*

acquisition of skills *and* understanding. At times, teachers in child-centered classrooms direct learning through explicit instruction. At others times, they facilitate learning through child-initiated discussion and cooperative instruction. Educators in Austin ISD told the task force that providing training in gifted and talented instruction to all teachers has enhanced student achievement and interest in their schools.

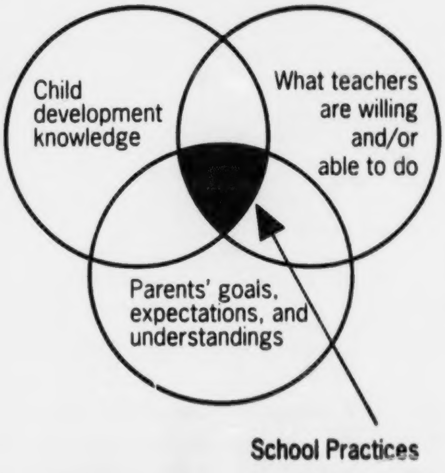
Children need learning materials that are engaging and appropriate. Across the state, the task force heard educators criticize the use of worksheets and other passive instructional materials and systems. Teachers, administrators, and college educators claimed that these materials generally take a one-dimensional approach to learning, and favor lower-, rather than higher-level, thinking skills. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) takes the position that learning materials should be real, relevant, and connected to children's lives. NAEYC states that the use of worksheets, coloring books, and adult-produced art for children to copy are not appropriate for children under the age of six. For young children, NAEYC states that materials such as clay, sand, unit blocks, and puzzles provide opportunities to create and manipulate objects and explore the concepts presented in the curriculum. Older children are more able to learn through written exercises and other adult-directed learning activities. For all children, learning materials such as quality books and recordings, paint, and learning opportunities such as dramatic play, field trips, and classroom responsibilities provide chances to assimilate skills and knowledge and connect them to the world outside school.

The task force believes that an essential component of involving children in learning is to allow them at all stages of early childhood and elementary education to see and reflect upon their work. Developmentally appropriate classrooms reflect the children that inhabit them, with extensive displays of their artwork, languages, and writing, as well as displays of their progress in mathematics, science, and social studies.

Use of Technology in Child-Centered Instruction

Increasingly, teachers are using computers and computer-based technologies in instruction. While technology can open new vistas for the application and development of understanding, its effectiveness depends upon the ways in which teachers use it in their classrooms. The developmentally appropriate use of technology promotes children's active learning, collaboration, and choice in the classroom. The task force saw brilliant uses of computer-based technology as it trav-

Major Factors that Account for School Practices


Child development knowledge
What teachers are willing and/or able to do
Parents' goals, expectations, and understandings
School Practices

The goal of developmentally appropriate instruction is to enlarge the area of overlap of all three circles as much as possible.

Source: Lillian Katz, "Pedagogical Issues in Early Childhood Education," in Sharon Lynn Kagan, ed., The Care and Education of America's Young Children: Obstacles and Opportunities.

Different Ways To Group Children of Different Ages

One key to the success of a multiage classroom is a variety of groupings that afford students the chance to advance at their own rate, tutor others, and mix with different children. Some types of grouping are:

- ☐ **Problem-solving grouping.** Learners are grouped around a common unsolved topic or problem, such as a group discussion related to the main idea of a story, or how to solve a conflict, or group investigations of the conditions best suited for growing plants.
- ☐ **Reinforcement grouping.** Learners who need more work in a specific area of task are grouped together.
- ☐ **Interest grouping.** Learners who are working on a common activity, such as reading poetry aloud or calculating the cost of cookies made to sell as a school project, work together.
- ☐ **Learning-style grouping.** Children with a common pattern of learning—for example, through manipulation of objects—work with each other.

Adapted from Language Arts Handbook for Primary-Grade Teacher in Multi-Graded Classrooms. *Winnipeg, Canada: Manitoba Department of Education, 1988 (in American Educator).*

elled the state. It also saw, in many cases, computers used as little more than electronic worksheets.

Research on the use of new technology in early childhood and elementary education indicates that, like all instructional materials, computers should serve as catalysts for problem solving and the exploration of complex ideas. The use of computers and related technologies should be connected to curricular goals. Just as subject-area skills should be connected to knowledge and understanding in the curriculum, the use of computers and instructional technology should support enhanced and meaningful instruction. High quality instructional technology is highly interactive, allowing children to create, revise, embark on new activities, and receive feedback on their progress.

Grouping Students for Learning

Classrooms and schools are enriched by the wide range of children's developmental levels, skills, and abilities. Effective classroom organization and instruction support this range of heterogeneous skills and abilities of children in the classroom. The task force recommends flexibly grouping students for instruction. By building instruction around a variety of flexible and heterogeneous groups, educators can individualize instruction and help guarantee that all students have access to a rich multisensory learning environment.

Teaching students in heterogeneous, flexible groups runs counter to much current instructional practice in early childhood and elementary education. The contrary view, tracking students in homogeneous fixed groups based on past academic performance of prior demonstrations of ability, is widely prevalent at all levels of Texas education. In a series of articles published in the *Phi Delta Kappan* magazine in 1986, Jeannie Oakes, a professor of education at the University of California at Los Angeles, cited research indicating that tracking students into homogeneous instructional groups exaggerates, rather than accommodates, the initial differences among students. Oakes stated that homogeneous, long-term grouping strategies differentiate curriculum and instruction on the basis of perceived ability. Tracking can limit student access to knowledge and obstruct efforts to assure that all students attain high levels of academic excellence.

Mixed-Age Grouping

Rather than restrict classroom organization by discrete grade levels, mixed-age grouping organizes children by developmental stages within age spans of two or three years. Mixed-age classrooms, particularly at the primary grade levels, are becoming more widespread as educators implement developmentally appropriate programs. Heterogeneous mixed-aged classrooms can facilitate instruction for continuous student progress. Mixed-age instruction provides children with extended time to acquire in-depth understanding at particular curricular levels, and expands social opportunities for learning as younger children can interact over long periods of time with older ones. It can help reduce the time needed at the beginning of each year for teachers and students to become acquainted.

Mixed-age groups may also relieve many of the problems related to retention by accommodating children's varied patterns of academic and social development. The task force heard much testimony about the success of heterogeneous mixed-age instruction from teachers and principals in schools that have implemented the strategy in both the primary and elementary grade levels.

Bilingual Instruction

In the diverse culture that is today's Texas, instruction must address the special needs of the state's linguistic, racial, and ethnic minority children. Bilingual instruction is important to ensure success for students with limited proficiency in English. Research indicates that effective programs provide instruction, particularly in literacy development, in the primary language in early childhood programs while simultaneously facilitating the acquisition of English. Too often, the period of concept formation of children in early childhood programs is sacrificed for the development of English proficiency. The *Texas Evaluation Study of Prekindergarten Programs* noted that prekindergarten classrooms emphasized the use of English as the language of instruction and that culturally and linguistically reflective materials received the lowest rating in both developmental quality and quantity of all prekindergarten materials.

A second aspect of bilingual education is to ensure all children, including native English speakers, have a proficiency in a language other than English. The task force believes that this goal should drive bilingual education at all grade levels. The task force recommends that schools develop a clear philosophy about the purpose of bilingual education and second language acquisition.

Play

One important way in which children develop understanding is through active involvement with adults and other children. Play is a crucial link in the connection between integrated learning and student interest. In Tyler ISD, educators told the task force that play is a vitally important, but widely misunderstood, component of children's learning.

According to the NAEYC, play allows children to explore, experiment, and manipulate materials in ways that are essential for understanding an integrated curriculum. Child-initiated and teacher-facilitated play provides opportunities for children to spontaneously practice newly acquired skills or knowledge. As children progress through the elementary years, the structure provided by early childhood play fosters curiosity, experimentation, imagination, and creativity – qualities that are essential to the development of critical thinking, problem solving, and the achievement of educational goals.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INSTRUCTION

For the Legislature:

1) Repeal restrictive statutes relating to services to special student populations and services that directly or indirectly contribute to tracking students based on perceptions of readiness or measures of prior achievement.

For the State Board of Education:

1) Amend rules to encourage school districts to implement developmentally appropriate practices, including the creation of mixed-age education programs and heterogeneous learning environments that meet the needs of special student populations within the educational mainstream.

For the Texas Education Agency:

1) Create frameworks that provide guidance to districts implementing developmentally appropriate instructional practices, including reading, in early childhood and elementary education.
2) Disseminate effective, developmentally appropriate early childhood and elementary learning practices.
3) Conduct evaluations of the academic and social performance of early childhood and elementary students in schools that have implemented developmentally appropriate practices.

For School Districts:

1) Implement developmentally appropriate practices to assure continuous high achievement for all early childhood and elementary students.
2) Critically examine the use of worksheets and other passive learning materials in the early grades. Implement developmentally appropriate instruction through materials, media, and technologies that support active learning and are geared to children's stages of development.
3) Develop a philosophy and implement a policy that articulates the purpose of bilingual education and second language acquisition in the district. Delineate the goals of these programs and their relationship to other district educational programs and practices.
4) Increase the use, especially in prekindergarten and primary programs, of student's primary language as the language of instruction.
5) Provide indoor and outdoor facilities that support hands-on active learning experiences, and that are concrete, real, and relevant to the lives of young children.

For Campuses:

1) Implement instructional practices that are grounded in current research in child development.
2) Critically examine the use of worksheets and other passive learning materials in the early grades. Implement developmentally appropriate instruction through materials, media, and technologies that support active learning and are geared to children's stages of development.
3) Focus instruction on preventing school failure, rather than remediating failed students. Provide all students with opportunities to explore the curriculum in depth, supporting each child's pursuit of high achievement and personal growth through accelerated instruction and enrichment of all learning activities on a continuous basis.
4) Establish child-centered multisensory learning environments in which instruc-

tion responds to student interest; promotes student participation in the curriculum; provides a rich context for a variety of social interaction between students, teachers, and other adults; and forges connections to the community served by the school.

5) Promote individual understanding through flexible and heterogeneous grouping of students. Organize learning groups across ages and abilities. Focus on promoting academic and personal growth rather than demonstrations of perceived ability or prior achievement. Allow for a variety of grouping techniques and instructional strategies. Structure the groups to encourage high levels of achievement and allow special student populations broad access to the educational mainstream.

6) Value student diversity. Use a student's home language, particularly in early childhood programs, as the primary language of instruction. Provide opportunities for linguistically diverse children in early childhood programs to engage in both teacher-to-student and student-to-student talk. Assure that student materials employed and produced in a classroom reflect the cultures and languages of the students.

7) In early childhood and primary programs create learning environments that encourage learning through well-defined activity centers and support the acquisition of social and academic skills through both child-initiated and teacher-structured play.

8) Extend opportunities for learning and foster after-class involvement with the curriculum above kindergarten through homework assignments that promote understanding and problem solving by engaging students in a variety of individual and group-oriented tasks.

ALTERNATIVES TO RETENTION

The task force urges educators to eliminate the use of retention in grade as an instructional strategy. Belief in the benefits of retention is one of the most deeply ingrained features of the educational landscape. There is a widely held perception among educators and parents that retention is synonymous with high standards. In an era of high stakes accountability, retention is often seen as a "gift of time" that allows students who might otherwise be at-risk of long-term school failure to achieve grade-level standards.

There is an extensive body of research, however, that casts doubt on the benefits of retention. *Flunking Grades: Research and Policies on Retention* includes an analysis of 63 studies on retention by C. T. Holmes. Holmes reports that 54 of these studies found retention to have harmful effects on a student's future academic achievement, self-concept, attitudes toward school, and rates of school attendance. These studies found that retention had the greatest negative impact on the future academic achievement of students. One of the studies Holmes analyzed indicated that student academic achievement in the first year after retention – which is a measure of performance in the grade the retained students were repeating – was significantly lower than the achievement of students of the same age and same socioeconomic status who had been promoted to the next grade.

Retention Contributes to Failure

There is also a connection between retention and the likelihood of dropping out of school. A study of the link between retention and dropping out conducted in the Austin Independent School District in 1987 found that grade level retention increased the probability that a student would drop out of school by nearly 30 percent. The connection between retention and dropping out is much greater than the connection between low academic achievement and dropping out of school. The Massachusetts Board of Education, in *A Focus on Retention*, reported that a student who is retained one time is 40 to 50 percent more likely to drop out of school, even if that retention occurred in the elementary years. If the student is retained a second time, the probability of dropping out increases to 90 percent.

Retention and Readiness

A subtler form of retention is often practiced at the kindergarten level. Many schools respond to the pressure of a "pushed-down" primary curriculum by instituting gatekeeping measures in kindergarten and first grade. These strategies include retaining students in kindergarten or placing them in developmental or transitional programs which add an extra year of schooling between kindergarten and first grade. While students are retained in later grades because their level of achievement is not on grade level, students can be retained in kindergarten for the reasons of poor academic performance or physical, social, or emotional immaturity.

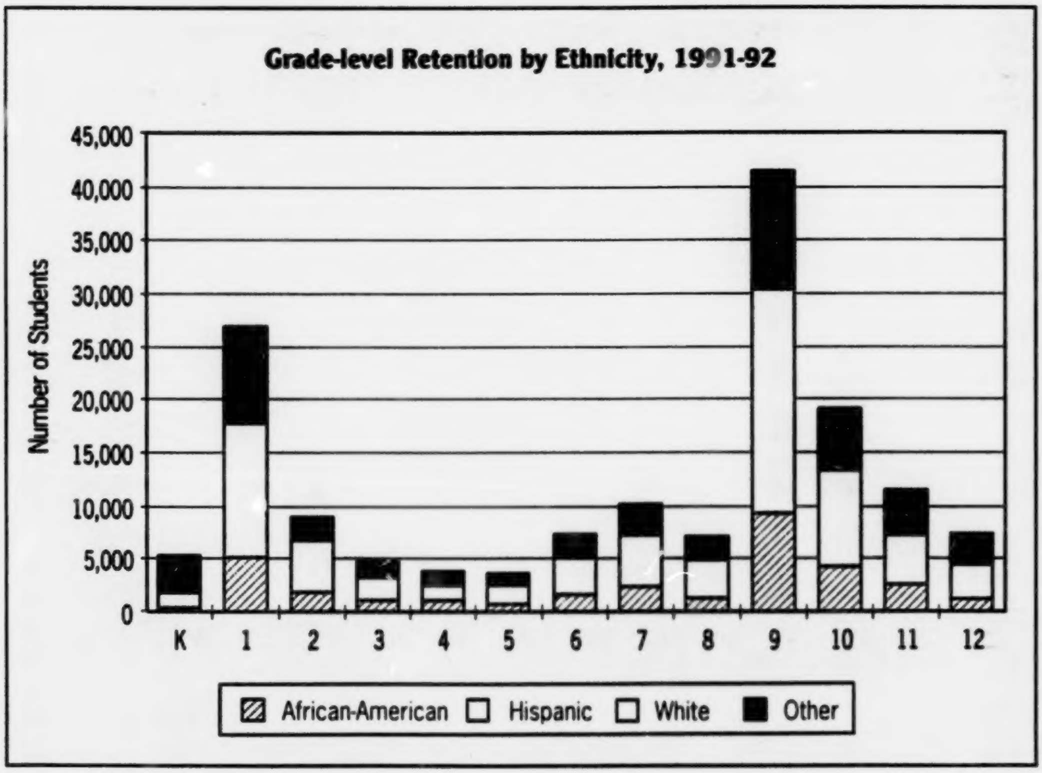
Research cited in *Flunking Grades: Research and Policies on Retention* indicates no long-term benefits for children retained in kindergarten, whether they are retained for academic or developmental reasons. Kindergarten students who are retained because of academic reasons perform no better than children who were eligible for a transition program but went on to first grade. Controlled studies of academically able students retained in kindergarten for developmental reasons find these students to be at the top of their class in grade one, but not ahead of where they would have been without the extra year of school. Moreover, authors Lorrie Shepherd and Mary Lee Smith state that any benefit that might accrue from retention in the early primary grade levels disappears by the end of the third grade.

In spite of the research, retention is widespread. More than 162,000 Texas students were retained in the 1991-92 school year. About 27,000 of these students were retained in the first grade, a number equal to 10.3 percent of the state's first grade class. Why?

Maureen Moore Scheevel cited three reasons for retention in her article, "Older is Better Right? Not Really", which appeared in the winter 1991 issue of the Texas Education Agency publication, *Research Briefs*:

- Retention is recognized as a traditional remedy for struggling students.
- Strict promotional criteria implemented in Texas may force retentions. State Board of Education rules include retention as a remedy for students not attaining promotional standards.
- High stakes testing, with published results comparing schools and districts on standardized tests, may influence placement decisions.

Research suggests that educators' belief about the role of ability in learning affects their decisions on instruction and retention. Shepherd and Smith found much higher rates of retention among students of teachers they classified as "nativists." According to the authors, nativist teachers subscribe to a view that children become ready for, and achieve in, school on the basis of their abilities. According to nativists, the process by which a student's ability unfolds is largely outside the influence of the teacher. Nativist teachers are far more inclined to retain a student in grade in an effort to give him or her additional time to become ready for the grade


Grade-level Retention by Ethnicity, 1991-92

No Retention Policy at Travis Heights Elementary

Travis Heights Elementary, in Austin ISD, has instituted a policy of developmentally appropriate education that involves no grade-level retention. There are 700 students in grades prekindergarten through five at Travis Heights. The population is 70 percent Hispanic, 25 percent White, and 5 percent African-American. Just over 50 percent of the students are on the free and reduced-price lunch program.

In 1989, Travis Heights Elementary developed a vertical team approach to education with its vertical team of middle and high schools, as well as St. Edward's University, a small college located nearby. The vertical team eased the development of a shared system of expectations and beliefs — from prekindergarten to graduate school — for the performance and responsibilities of students, educators, families, and community members. Teachers from all grade levels worked together to plan the actions and interventions needed to develop high levels of achievement for their students and professionalism for themselves.

Educators at Travis Heights Elementary took a number of steps to assure each student's continuous academic and personal growth. A thematic and interdisciplinary curriculum is in place school-wide. Students work extensively in cooperative groups. All teachers meet the state's training requirements for gifted and talented education, assuring each student of the enrichment needed to achieve their full potential.

Students are grouped heterogeneously and flexibly in mixed-age classes at Travis Heights. This strategy replaces traditional grade levels with teams of teachers and students spanning three to four chronological years. The mixed-age classes are organized into two strands, allowing for continuous progress no matter where the student enters the school:

☐ PK–K; 1–2; 3–4; 5

☐ K–1; 2–3; 4–5

The mixed-age groups provide teachers and students more time — for progressing toward the goals and grade-level benchmarks articulated in the school-wide curriculum, and for learning about and knowing each other. With this strategy retention is unnecessary. A K–1 student at risk of failure may be enrolled in the 1–2 class the next school year, providing both support and exposure to new curriculum and materials.

Assessment of student performance is multifaceted and performance-based. Grade-level benchmarks are in place. Portfolios are used widely. Alternative report cards, covering nine-week grading periods, have been developed at the primary level. Parent-teacher-student conferences are held each nine weeks.

Prekindergarten at Travis Heights is a full-day program. Flexible extended-day and extended-year instruction is in place in the school. A year-round calendar is not in place because that schedule has not been implemented at the middle or high school making up the vertical team.

Travis Heights faculty have taken a community-center approach to education. The school reaches out to preschool children and families with the HIPPY (Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters) program. A parent information center provides families with both current research in early childhood and elementary education and the latest news about the school. The school newsletter is published in English and Spanish. The school supports open forums, led by parents or family members, to discuss educational and community issues. A homework hotline, available in English and Spanish, is a daily link between parents, families, and the activities of the school.

Travis Heights is part of the Communities in Schools program. The school has a full-time nurse. On-site health, mental health, and social services are available for students and families in need. Tutoring is provided to the elementary students by members of the community and students from the other schools on the vertical team.

level. The extensive staff development conducted as a result of the retention study in Austin ISD led to fewer grade level retentions, partly because educators moved from relying on ability as the prime indicator of performance toward creating high-quality learning environments for all students.

There are patterns to grade retention. Peak retention rates are at the first and ninth grades – the entry points into elementary and secondary school – where the organizational and curricular structure of schooling are most likely to change. First grade is the entry point for full-day, formal schooling. The first grade curriculum is also much more rigorous and academically oriented than the more developmentally appropriate curriculum in kindergarten. Educators in Humble ISD told task force members that the transition between the kindergarten and first grade curriculum was not smooth, and that the transition between the two grade levels would become more difficult once the restructured prekindergarten and kindergarten essential elements were implemented in 1995. The uneven transition into first grade puts many students at risk of being retained and eventual school failure.

Alternatives to Retention

Discussion of the curriculum leads back to two of the central features of the problem of retention. First, a curriculum geared to the average student will always cause some students difficulty. Second, grade retention does not alleviate the difficulty. Too often, the extra year in grade gives retained students little more than the opportunity to repeat without variation the material they struggled with in the first year. The alternative to retention is to provide educators with adequate support so that they can develop methods of nurturing high levels of achievement for students who are challenged to stay on grade level. The task force believes that any effort to eliminate retention as an instructional strategy must be supported with instructional programs that lead to high academic performance for all students.

To support the elimination of retention at the state level, the task force urges the State Board of Education to amend rules related to promotion and retention so that, except in highly exceptional cases, students cannot be retained in early childhood or elementary education. In addition, the task force recommends that the board amend rules related to alternatives to social promotion so that districts do not see retention as a viable tool in maintaining high levels of student performance.

At the district and campus level, the task force recommends the development of local policies that prohibit retention, except in exceptional cases, and the implementation of extended year programs, as provided for in sections 21.562 and 21.563 of the *Texas Education Code.*

The task force also recommends that early childhood educators develop and critically examine a number of strategies to eliminate retention, including, but not limited to, accelerated instruction, mixed-age grouping, lower student-to-educator ratios, and extended year programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO ELIMINATE RETENTION

For the Legislature:

1) Fund a student-adult ratio of 22-2 in early childhood and primary programs. Fund a student-teacher ratio of 22-1 in programs serving children in grade 5.

For the State Board of Education:

1) Amend rules to prohibit retention of students in early childhood through middle grade programs.

For the Texas Education Agency:

1) Develop guidelines for districts that lead to the elimination of retention while ensuring high achievement for all students. Disseminate practices that have proven effective in eliminating retention, such as lower student-adult ratios, accelerated instruction, heterogeneous mixed-age grouping, and flexible, extended learning time. Indicate, through guidelines and the dissemination of effective practices, that eliminating retention depends upon a coordinated, holistic approach to each student's education.

2) Evaluate the results of pilot programs to eliminate retention, cited in *Texas Education Code* §21.562 (State-Funded Optional Extended Year Program). Compare the results of these programs to the programs to eliminate retention cited in *Texas Education Code* §21.563 (Optional Extended Year Program).

For Regional Education Service Centers:

1) Provide training in practices that have proven effective in eliminating retention.

2) Collaborate with early childhood and elementary school network mentor schools that have been recognized for their implementation of programs that have eliminated retention.

For School Districts:

1) Eliminate retention through approaches to instruction that ensure high achievement for all students. Employ curriculum, instructional practices, organizational and staffing arrangements, and school calendars that overcome the need to retain students in grade.

2) Include policies and programs to eliminate retention in district improvement plans.

For Campuses:

1) Eliminate retention through approaches to instruction that ensure high achievement for all students. Include policies and programs to eliminate retention in campus improvement plans.

2) Train administrators, teachers, and support staff in methods and programs that are effective in eliminating retention.

3) Develop plans to meet the social and academic needs of children in danger of being retained, drawing upon a network of teacher, administrator, counselor, and community support.

4) Educate campus faculties, parents and families, and community members on the negative effects of retention on future academic performance, student self-esteem, and likelihood of dropping out of school.

5) Collaborate with early childhood and elementary school network mentor schools that have effectively implemented programs that eliminate retention.

ASSESSMENT

Assessment is a critical component of early childhood and elementary education because it forms the basis for several important decisions affecting children's educational opportunities and experiences. Teachers, principals, and counselors assess children using a variety of methods, including observation, records, work samples, and tests. The purpose of these assessment activities is to document children's progress, plan instruction, and communicate with parents. At the district, state, and federal levels, assessment is used to evaluate program effectiveness and provide measures of accountability. All assessment programs should improve services for children and ensure that children benefit from their educational experiences, while adhering to the principles of developmentally appropriate education.

Informing Instruction

The primary purpose of assessment is to inform instruction. Teachers routinely employ both formal and informal assessment techniques to determine each child's strengths, learning needs, and interests. Educators working with young children conduct much of their assessments through observation by keeping records of a child's progress and assessing how the child performs specific tasks. Developmentally appropriate programs assess students in ways that do not intrude in the scheme of learning. They integrate assessment and instruction so that the process of assessment not only measures knowledge but also enhances the child's understanding of skills and concepts.

The task force favors continuous observation and recording methods as the least intrusive forms of assessment in early childhood and elementary classrooms. Informal assessments, such as anecdotal records, narrative logs and journals, checklists, and rating scales, provide full information about the whole child. Letter grades, on the other hand, limit the picture to onetime snapshots of a child's performance or behavior. By keeping records of the children in their classrooms, educators are able to reflect, discover patterns, and implement appropriate strategies to reach a child in trouble. Another powerful component of ongoing assessment is the use of portfolios containing samples of a student's work. Taken together, narratives, checklists, and portfolios can provide rich information for teachers to conduct constructive conferences with students and their parents.

Texas early childhood and elementary educators are turning to developmentally appropriate reporting practices. During the 1991-92 school year, 19 school districts or elementary campuses received waivers from the state to allow the use of alternatives to traditional letter or numerical grades. In addition, 17 districts received waivers allowing a change in the reporting period from six weeks to nine weeks that same year. A nine-week reporting period allows more time between reporting periods, giving students greater opportunities to learn.

Program Evaluation

The second purpose of assessment is program evaluation. The most prevalent assessments used to evaluate early childhood and elementary programs in Texas are the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) and the Norm-Referenced Assessment Program of Texas (NAPT). The TAAS is a criterion-referenced test that measures student achievement of the state's essential elements and provides indicators for state accountability. Currently, the TAAS measures student achievement in reading and mathematics in grades 3 through 8 at the end of the school year. TAAS tests in grades 4, 8, and 10 also include science and social studies. The NAPT is a nationally standardized, norm-referenced test administered in grades 3 through 11. Results from NAPT are used to compare the performance of Texas children to those in the U.S. as a whole and to evaluate special programs, such as the federal Chapter 1 compensatory education program. Beginning with the 1993-94 school year, Texas districts are no longer required to administer the NAPT (as explained later in this chapter). Other norm-referenced tests, such as the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), are used widely in grades prekindergarten through 2 for program evaluation purposes.

In recent years, declines in the academic performance of schoolchildren in Texas and elsewhere have led decision-makers to call for more measures of accountability to accompany increased standards and expectations. The challenge of state-level accountability is to assess the entire instructional program, not just student performance on isolated skills. Most achievement tests used for program evaluation and accountability are currently designed to measure skill- and knowledge acquisition through multiple-choice questions. These tests are relatively inexpensive and afford a high degree of reliability and comparability. There is concern, however, that the use of standardized achievement tests as the primary basis for important decisions, such as funding, accreditation, and incentive awards, raises their stakes to a considerable degree and may contribute to the following practices.

- In an attempt to cover the curriculum and prepare students in the lower grades for the tests they will face in later years,

Alternative Assessment In Fort Worth ISD

Elementary schools in Forth Worth ISD are implementing developmentally appropriate forms of assessment in their early childhood and primary grade classrooms. Five schools participating in the Connections Project use the Work Sampling System developed at the University of Michigan. Work Sampling is a performance assessment system for preschool through grade 3 that consists of three components: developmental checklists, portfolios, and summary reports.

Samuel J. Meisels, professor of education at the University of Michigan and creator of the Work Sampling System, says the checklists provide evidence about growth and indicate student strengths and difficulties while informing portfolio goals. Portfolios inform teachers about the quality of the work documented in the checklists and graphically show changes in children's abilities across time. Summary reports monitor the progress documented in the checklists and portfolios, and report them in an easily understandable format. Taken together, these components constitute an ongoing evaluation process that reflects the actual goals and objectives of the classroom teacher and keeps track of children's continuous progress through the curriculum. The Connections Project schools use the Work Sampling System to determine the developmental needs of children, provide instructional guidance and supervision and fulfill district accountability requirements.

Fort Worth's Alice Carlson Applied Learning Center has devised its own system of early childhood portfolios and teacher narratives to guide instructional practice and facilitate parent conferences. Students select samples from their work to be included in the portfolios. A kindergarten teacher at the center told the task force she faced many challenges at the outset of implementing the portfolio system, but one parent conference made her struggle worthwhile: "The mother began to cry as she looked through her son's portfolio. She told me that from the time her son was a baby, her entire family had believed the child was retarded. The progress demonstrated in her son's portfolio was so clear that she knew, for the first time in his life, that he was not. No report card, no standardized test, could have had that impact on this mother."

schools "push" the elementary curriculum down to the early childhood and primary levels.

- Responding to the pressure to yield high scores, schools often resort to rote drill and remediation methods, at the expense of more engaging and constructive activities which are more appropriate for young children.

- The focus on accountability changes the way instructional time is used, as schools spend time preparing for state and national assessments, rather than providing opportunities to explore the curriculum.

During their visits to schools across the state, the task force heard strong and sometimes passionate testimony from educators and parents who objected to the practice of administering standardized tests to young children, especially to kindergartners and first graders. The following excerpts sample their comments.

- Educators in Dallas ISD decried the use of standardized testing, questioned their developmental appropriateness, and commented that the tests impact heavily on curriculum and instruction. They stated that the grade-level designations required by traditional standardized tests were incompatible with flexible instructional arrangements such as multiage grouping.

- Educators in Corpus Christi ISD stated that results of standardized tests do more for the image of schools and districts than for the educational benefit of children.

- Educators in Houston ISD stated that the methods and goals of standardized testing and test-based accountability contradicts the methods and goals of active, child-centered education.

- A teacher educator told the task force at a hearing in Dallas ISD that standardized tests assess only 25 percent of what students know and urged educators to find ways to authentically assess the other 75 percent.

Traditional assessment	**Performance assessment**
Takes snapshot of the student's performance; highly susceptible to day-to-day variations in behavior and interest	Portfolios grow with the student; checklists show progress; present longitudinal picture
Isolated activity; disrupts instruction	Ongoing process; not intrusive to instruction
Age and grade important variables	Assessment organized around individual student; indicates learning needs
Limited ability to measure progress in all developmental domains	Checklists can include outcomes in all academic, social, and physical domains
Test design provides limited assessment of thinking and communication	Able to assess higher-order thinking, communication skills, and problem solving
Drives local curriculum to take the form of narrow, isolated tasks	Draws upon local curriculum objectives and outcome standards

A survey of research on achievement testing in the early grades gave the task force additional insights into the inappropriateness of the practice. Administration of a standardized achievement test is in direct contrast with the developmental nature of young children, since it requires children to sit at a desk for extended periods of time filling in bubbles with a pencil. The higher-order thinking skills that are the focus of developmentally appropriate education cannot be reduced easily to a multiple-choice test format. Cultivating problem-solving skills requires students to explore alternatives and make inferences and predictions, rather than bubble in the right or wrong, black or white, choices emphasized in multiple-choice tests.

A third use of assessment is to determine readiness for early childhood programs. The task force is disturbed by the use of readiness testing in the early grades. Readiness tests are assessments used by educators to assess a child's level of preparedness for a specific academic program and to tailor the program to meet the needs of the child. Many schools, however, use readiness tests to optimize instructional resources by achieving homogeneity in classrooms. Some also use results from readiness tests to convince parents to keep some children out of school for another year or place them in developmental or transitional programs. Samuel Meisels says "readiness" itself is a relative term, being a combination of children's prior experiences, genetic endowment, as well as many environmental and cultural experiences they encounter. By basing a child's potential for learning on a single readiness test, we assume that all children develop at identical rates. Research on child development, however, suggests that children's developmental age fluctuates widely during the first eight years of life. According to John Goodlad and Robert Anderson, children enter the first grade with a developmental age range of three to five years. That initial spread increases over the years so that it is approximately double this amount by the time children approach the end of elementary school.

Every child has a right to begin school at the legal age of entry. Today's children come from a variety of backgrounds, cultures, and levels of preparedness. Schools have the responsibility to accommodate all of them in challenging, enriched, and developmentally appropriate learning environments. The task force strongly recommends that placement decisions and determinations of whether a student is at-risk of dropping out of school be based on a variety of authentic measures that accommodate children's individual characteristics and needs, rather than on the student's performance on a standardized norm-referenced test. Readiness tests or end-of-year achievement tests should not be used to predict children's future potential, determine their developmental needs, retain them in a grade, or place them in yearlong remedial programs. There is justifiable fear that reform initiatives could lead to more abuse of readiness tests. National policy makers are working to cast the first goal of Goals 2000, that all children will come to school ready to learn, in a manner that does not lead to inappropriate testing methods to measure progress toward that goal.

Although standardized achievement tests have been the mainstay of the Texas state assessment program, the state is making steady progress toward the implementation of performance-based assessments that can test the outcomes of early childhood and elementary education in developmentally appropriate ways. The state assessment plan calls for further alignment of state assessments with the essential elements of the curriculum and for the development of performance-based and developmentally appropriate measures in all content areas assessed. The plan moved all statewide assessments to the end of the instructional period they test and reduced the total number of student hours spent in the statewide assessment program.

As the TAAS is more closely aligned with the curriculum than are norm-referenced tests such as the NAPT, the state is currently phasing out statewide administration of the NAPT. A recent change in federal regulations has given an additional boost to that effort. For years, school districts have administered nationally standardized norm-referenced tests to fulfill federal requirements of evaluating special programs such as Chapter 1. Although federal regulations have never specifically required norm-referenced tests for evaluation, districts have used these tests because of their inherent growth scales, low cost, and high degree of reliability.

Under a waiver granted by the U.S. Department of Education, Texas may use results of TAAS tests to fulfill evaluation purposes beginning in the 1994-95 school year. Program evaluation at grades prekindergarten through 3 will be accomplished by using desired outcomes other than tests, removing the need for districts to administer norm-referenced tests for program evaluation purposes at any grade level. Beginning with the 1993-94 school year, districts are no longer required to administer the NAPT. The Texas Education Agency is scheduled to implement developmental scales and state norms for TAAS, which will allow for year-to-year evaluation of Chapter 1 programs using that test. The elimination of NAPT as a state requirement will streamline the state assessment system. As of November 1993, 63 percent of Texas school districts have chosen to discontinue administration of the NAPT.

Non-Intrusive Assessment

The move toward a true performance-based assessment program in Texas will take several years; however, the writing component of TAAS already includes an open-ended performance task. The Texas Education Agency is piloting performance tasks in the grade four science and social studies TAAS tests during 1993-94. The inclusion of performance tasks in statewide assessment represents a significant step away from the limited teacher involvement which characterizes traditional testing. The open-ended tasks allow teachers to create a supportive classroom atmosphere in which students can apply their creative thinking and problem-solving skills to their knowledge of subject matter.

Development of large-scale performance-based assessments will require time and extensive training of educators. Early childhood and elementary educators have a vested interest in designing developmentally appropriate assessments for the state's programs to assure that evaluation instruments carefully reflect the developmental needs of children.

By highlighting the issues surrounding testing, the task force is not calling for an end to all kinds of assessment in the early grades. It recognizes the need to measure progress toward local and state goals for early childhood and elementary education. The challenge facing all educators in Texas is to devise new ways to inform educators and parents about student progress that do not intrude in the educational experience of children.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ASSESSMENT

For the Federal Government:

1) Eliminate regulations that reallocate Chapter 1 funds away from schools that show improved test scores and base program eligibility for services on economic criteria rather than test scores.
2) Reduce the stakes associated with norm-referenced achievement testing of young children by prohibiting the use of such tests to evaluate federally funded programs below grade 3.
3) Allow states and school districts to evaluate federally-funded programs through sampling methods and performance-based assessments that match locally-defined objectives of programs.

For the Legislature:

1) Amend *Texas Education Code* §21.557 (f)(2)(a) so that the determination of whether a student is at-risk of dropping out of school in grades prekindergarten through 6 does not depend upon the student's performance on a single readiness test or assessment instrument given at the beginning of the school year, but draws upon multiple and authentic assessment measures.
2) Amend *Texas Education Code* §35.026 (Local Option) to state that any criterion- or norm-referenced assessment adopted and administered by a school district in addition to the state assessment program shall reflect nationally-recognized standards of developmentally appropriate educational practice.

For the State Board of Education:

1) Encourage the use of local early childhood and elementary accountability systems that include authentic measures of student performance and provide indicators of the learning environment, teacher preparation, and parent involvement.
2) Amend rules to allow sampling methods to be used as alternatives to every-student testing for purposes of program evaluation, accountability, and comparison to national norms.
3) Develop rules to encourage developmentally appropriate reporting practices, such as alternatives to number and letter grades and nine-week grading periods, in the primary grades.
4) Develop rules requiring publishers of standardized and/or norm-referenced tests used by school districts to provide information on test validity, reliability, and disaggregated norms for subpopulations to the state and school districts.

For the Texas Education Agency:

1) Define a set of performance standards for early childhood and elementary education programs which are based on education goals and tied to developmentally appropriate curriculum and instruction.
2) Develop guidelines for a system of performance assessments that measure student progress toward the performance standards, combining long-term projects, narrative evaluations, portfolios, and onetime assessments of performance.

For School Districts:

1) Refrain from the inappropriate use of standardized tests for young children; evaluate each instrument on the basis of its validity and reliability and use it only for the purpose for which it was designed.
2) Adopt assessment strategies that value cultural and linguistic diversity and are

congruent with the curriculum and instructional practices of the program.

3) Develop assessment guidelines for enrollment, readiness, and placement of children in early childhood programs that use multiple, authentic measures, and informal observations by teachers and parents, rather than a single test score.
4) Employ alternatives to norm-referenced achievement tests for identification and program evaluation, as state and federal regulations permit.
5) Incorporate tasks, such as design, selection, and evaluation of assessment instruments, into professional development activities of educators.

For Campuses:

1) Refrain from the use of letter grades during early childhood and elementary years; assess children's progress toward established performance standards through teacher observation narratives, checklists, and portfolios containing samples of children's work; develop a structured method of communicating children's progress to parents.
2) Conduct conferences with parents and children to communicate their children's progress and to solicit their expertise in making decisions regarding placement and referral.

For Parents:

1) Participate in teacher-student-parent conferences on the educational progress, performance, and assessment of your child.

Professional Development and Training

It's Elementary!, the report of the California Elementary Grades Task Force, states that the goals of child-centered education cannot be achieved without teacher-centered reforms. The Texas Task Force on Early Childhood and Elementary Education believes that the preparation and training of teachers, principals, counselors, care givers, and support staff must change to ensure professional performance in a restructured system of education in Texas. National experts convened by the Carnegie Corporation for a 1992 meeting on improving early childhood education concluded: no substantial change will occur in schools without a substantial change in the goals, knowledge, and skills of educators. A system focused on active learners will require change in how educators perceive their roles, what they understand about children and learning, how thoroughly they know academic subjects, and what they know how to do in the classroom.

Preparation of Teachers for Work in Developmentally Appropriate Classrooms

In Texas, there are no undergraduate education degrees. Prospective teachers complete a degree program that is based on an academic major or interdisciplinary major including reading. They receive an elementary teaching certificate, covering either grades prekindergarten through six, one through six, or one through eight, depending on the academic specialization selected by the student *and* 18 hours of course work in education, including student teaching. Prospective elementary teachers may enroll in an optional academic specialization for early childhood certification, known as Option IV. The Option IV certificate program, covering grades prekindergarten through six, is the only elementary certification option that focuses on prekindergarten- and kindergarten-aged children.

Under Option IV, prospective teachers take 24 hours of interdisciplinary courses emphasizing early childhood education. This course load is six hours greater than the 18 hours of subject-area specialization required of prospective

Endorsement and Prekindergarten Teachers

- ☐ Legislation passed in 1984 established statewide prekindergarten programs in Texas.
- ☐ Prior to the 1991-92 school year, Texas prekindergarten teachers were not required to hold an early childhood education certificate or endorsement.
- ☐ They were required to complete a minimum of 90 clock hours of inservice training or six semester hours of early childhood education by September 1, 1993.
- ☐ Since the advent of the 1991-92 school year, entering prekindergarten teachers have been required to hold credentials in early childhood education.
- ☐ In 1991, the *Texas Evaluation of Prekindergarten Programs* found that over 50 percent of the state's prekindergarten teachers had more than six years' experience. Less than 50 percent of these teachers held the early childhood education certificate or endorsement.

elementary teachers enrolled under the predominant Option II certification program. An early childhood education endorsement is available for Texas prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers. Teachers can hold this endorsement in addition to their elementary teacher certification. Teachers without an Option IV elementary certificate can receive an early childhood endorsement by passing the Examination for the Certification of Educators in Texas (ExCET) test in early childhood education and teaching one year in a prekindergarten or kindergarten classroom. Academic course work in early childhood education is not a prerequisite to taking or passing the ExCET test.

Before 1984, a Teacher of Young Children (TYC) certificate, covering prekindergarten through the third grade, was offered to prospective Texas teachers. This certificate was based upon an interdisciplinary degree that incorporated courses in education, child development, and areas such as health and food and nutrition. The focus of the certificate was on teaching skills and knowledge of early childhood development. Although popular with teachers, campus principals and school district personnel officials felt that the certificate constrained their ability to staff elementary school classrooms. With the increased emphasis on developmentally appropriate education and growing enrollments in district prekindergarten programs, however, teachers are urging policy makers to reexamine the utility of the TYC certificate. At several public hearings held by the task force, educators voiced support for the reinstatement of the TYC certificate. Educators in Dallas ISD told the task force that the strength of the TYC certificate was its blend of classroom-based teaching knowledge and Piagetian and other theories of child development.

The task force believes that the study of child development and how children learn is essential to the preparation of early childhood and elementary educators. Incorporating this knowledge into elementary education certificate programs will increase the focus on the child and place greater emphasis on learning theory. Laverne Warner, professor of education at Sam Houston State University, told the task force that knowledge of child development and greater awareness of learning theory is needed in undergraduate education courses. This foundation of knowledge will make teachers more effective in the classroom by enhancing their ability to

New Certification Systems

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards is establishing teacher certification standards that address the developmental nature of learning. The standards incorporate:

- ☐ professional knowledge;
- ☐ knowledge of child development;
- ☐ teaching knowledge distinctive to particular ages of children; and
- ☐ subject matter expertise.

The proposed certificates are based on ages rather than grade levels, with the age ranges overlapping to provide flexibility for assignment. An early childhood education certificate proposed by the teaching standards board covers the years three through eight. The board proposes a middle childhood education certificate for teachers of children aged seven through 12. At the middle childhood level, both age range generalist and subject specialist certificates are proposed. Full implementation of this system is expected in the 1997-98 school year.

guide student learning and respond to student needs.

The task force supports specialized training for early childhood teachers and recommends that all teachers in early childhood programs – serving children from prekindergarten through the primary grade levels – hold early childhood education credentials. *Right from the Start*, the report of the National Association of State Boards of Education Task Force on Early Childhood Education, advocates specialized training in early childhood education as a component in any certificate to teach at this level. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) urges states to adopt early childhood certification standards for teachers of children from birth to age eight. Across the country, state boards of education are adopting licensing standards for early childhood education teachers. Iowa, New Mexico, and Tennessee have adopted birth through age 8 teaching certificates. The Pennsylvania state board of education is considering the certificate. Oklahoma offers a prekindergarten through grade three teacher's certificate.

In developing new credentialing and certification standards, the task force cautions policy makers to balance the academic requirements for professional knowledge and training and to structure any new certification program in such a way that one series of grade levels is not emphasized over another. There is a current shortage of teachers in Texas schools that hold both a bilingual certificate and an early childhood education certificate. Each requires prospective teachers to complete 24 hours of course work. The majority of prospective elementary teachers are required to complete only 18 hours within an academic specialization, as opposed to the 48 hours required for both bilingual and early childhood certificates.

The mismatch between teacher supply and demand is magnified by the enrollment criteria of the state's public school prekindergarten program: eligible children must be either limited-English proficient or from low income families. Educators in Humble ISD told the task force that the conflict between program eligibility requirements and lack of certified teachers jeopardizes both the implementation and the success of prekindergarten programs. In some cases, school districts are addressing the lack of properly credentialed teachers at the prekindergarten level by seeking waivers to place bilingual-certified but not early childhood-endorsed teachers in those programs. This effort goes a long way to meet the language needs of prekindergarten students, but does not assure that these young children will be provided a developmentally appropriate education.

Professionalism of Early Childhood Educators and Care Providers Outside the Public School System

State certification and endorsement requirements for prekindergarten, kindergarten, and elementary school teachers do not apply to early childhood educators and care providers working in programs outside the public schools. Non-public school early care and education in Texas is characterized by a wide variety of programs, settings, roles, and responsibilities. Nonregistered home care providers, registered home care providers, nonprofit and for-profit child care centers and preschool programs, Head Start, and other programs constitute an array of program and service options.

As more parents have entered the work force, the growing demand for early care and education programs has increased the focus on the issues of quality, effectiveness, and professional status of care providers. Early care and education administrators, trainers, and teachers tie professional status, program quality, and effectiveness to enhanced preparation and opportunities for training for early care and education staff. The Wheelock College Center for Career Development in Early Care and Education found, however, that training systems in this field are fragmented, sporadic, and often unsuited to the needs of adult learners. Further, there is no state-supported entry level degree or training regimen for early care and education providers. In addition, the low wages and high staff turnover rates that characterize the early care and education work force challenge any attempt to increase preparation requirements or professional standards in these areas.

Although there is no state-required preparation path for early care and education teachers or administrators, policy makers and professional associations at the national level have agreed upon an entry level professional credential. The Child Development Associate (CDA) credential is an emerging national standard for early care and education teachers and administrators. The CDA began as a competency-based credential available to early care and education providers meeting specific performance criteria. The criteria have become the basis of two-year child development degree programs offered in community and junior colleges across the country.

Abilities Included in the CDA Credential

The Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential is based upon as assessment of the candidate's ability to:

- ☐ establish and maintain a safe and healthy learning environment;
- ☐ advance physical and intellectual competence;
- ☐ support social and emotional development and provide positive guidance;
- ☐ establish positive and productive relationships with families;
- ☐ ensure a well-run, purposeful program responsive to participant needs; and
- ☐ maintain a commitment to professionalism.

The CDA credential is central to accreditation standards published by the NAEYC, Head Start program standards, and Texas Department of Human Services Designated Vendor Criteria. All of these standards base staff-related measures of program quality on the number of educators or caregivers holding a CDA or related credential. The NAEYC accreditation standards state that each lead teacher in an early care and education program should have, at minimum, the CDA credential or an associate degree in child development or early childhood education. Head Start programs also are mandated to have at least one teacher with a CDA credential or degree in early childhood education.

The Texas Department of Human Services seeks to influence the quality of licensed early care facilities in Texas through Designated Vendor Criteria. The criteria are a set of voluntary standards that provide qualifying early care vendors in the state with increased access to training, scholarships for college courses, and discounts for equipment. The criteria state that at least 15 percent of the caregivers in an early care center, or in small centers no less than one staff member, must either: hold the CDA or related credential; hold an associate or baccalaureate degree in child development or early childhood education; have completed 12 semester hours and have one year of full-time paid experience in an early care setting; or have two years of full-time paid experience in an early care setting under a trained director or supervisor while working toward the CDA credential. As important as these criteria are to quality early care, however, it is estimated that only one in 10 of the care providers participating in the department's Child Care Management Services system meet the Designated Vendor Criteria.

To counter the lack of state-required entry-level teacher's credentials, low wages, and high staff turnover rates, early care and education policy makers and administrators seek to establish an integrated model of professional development that builds upon work experience and facilitates entry into two- and four-year degree programs. The Center of Career Development in Early Care and Education calls for a system of training and development that coordinates credit earned at each progressive level of experience and education. Credit or credentials earned at one level will be fully accepted at the next. The draft training model of the Texas Head Start Collaboration Project also parallels this model. These initiatives seek to assure quality early care and education without jeopardizing the supply of early care education or the careers of teachers and care providers already working in the field.

Building on the training and development model, early childhood policy makers and service providers also seek to enhance the professionalism of their field by incorporating more work experience and training into their preparation for teaching certificates in elementary education. Echoing the work of these policy makers, the Harris County Department of Education Early Childhood Leadership Group recommended alternative training options for teachers of young children that included awarding academic credit for work experience.

The task force supports the awarding of credit for experience in progress toward the CDA credential and recommends that state policy makers develop measures to govern the transfer of academic credit earned in pursuit of a two-year child development degree to a four-year early

Salary and Staff Turnover Rates in Early Care and Education

The Demand and Supply of Child Care in 1990 describes the professional status of early care and education providers in terms of salary and turnover rates.

- ☐ The survey found that the average wage of teachers in early care and education programs in 1990 was $11,500 — half of these teachers earned less than $11,000 per year.
- ☐ The hourly rates reported in the study — based on an average of 30 hours per week 50 weeks per year, ranged from $14.40 per hour in public school programs to $5.43 per hour in for-profit child care chains.
- ☐ The average hourly wage in regulated home-based day care was $4.04. In non-regulated home-based care the average hourly wage was $1.25.
- ☐ The average turnover rate is 25 percent.

Compare these figures to public school teachers in Texas.

- ☐ The Texas Education Agency reported that the average total salary of teachers in the 1989-90 school year was $27,496.
- ☐ A 1993 Texas Education Agency study, *Working Conditions of Texas Teachers*, reported that elementary teachers earn less than their middle and high school colleagues. *The Demand and Supply of Child Care in 1990* reported a one-year staff turnover rate of 25 percent, ranging from 14 percent turnover in public school early childhood education programs to a 39 percent turnover rate in for-profit child care chains.
- ☐ A 1993 study of Texas teachers reported a staff turnover rate of 11.8 percent.

childhood or elementary teacher certificate program. To further enhance the career path of early care and education service providers, the task force recommends that teacher certification programs, either in institutions of higher education or alternative certification programs, award prospective teachers credit for experience in nationally accredited early care and education programs.

Training of Campus Administrators

The training of principals and administrators is vital to successful implementation of developmentally appropriate early childhood and elementary programs. The task force calls on elementary school principals and supervisors to enhance their administrative skills with specialized knowledge of how children learn and develop. In site visits and public hearings across the state, early childhood and elementary teachers told the task force that principals on campuses with early childhood programs need to be specially trained in developmentally appropriate practices. Frequently, these teachers stated that principals should have an administrator's endorsement in early childhood education. Florida requires all principals with prekindergarten programs in their school to have at least six college credits or 120 staff development hours in early childhood education.

Ongoing Professional Development

Enhanced professional preparation for incoming early childhood and elementary teachers will not be enough to assure developmentally appropriate practice at the early grades. The average teacher in Texas has eight years' experience. New teachers make up only 6.3 percent of the state's teacher work force each year. It is essential that current teachers receive training in the design and implementation of developmentally appropriate early childhood and elementary education.

The task force strongly recommends that implementation of a professional development system for early childhood and elementary educators adhere to two fundamental ideas. First, design and deliver it in ways that are developmentally appropriate for adult learners. Second, base it on an assessment of campus needs and student improvement goals that have been articulated through the site-based decision making process.

Developmentally Appropriate Professional Growth

The NAEYC publication, *Growing Teachers*, articulates a developmentally appropriate view of adult learning and professional development. The authors state that adults, like children, learn best when they are able to actively participate in instruction. At all stages of human development and for students as well as professionals, people acquire knowledge and create higher levels of expertise by incorporating new ideas and information with the skills, attitudes, and knowledge they bring with them to the learning experience.

The social nature of learning is valued in developmentally appropriate models of professional development. In developmentally appropriate training, information addresses educators' interests. It connects theory to the real world and is based on pervasive opportunities for interaction, discussion, and the refinement of ideas. In this view, educators learn by sharing information in the different roles of teacher and learner, mentor and team member.

Too often, professional development initiatives in the past have treated educators as passive learners rather than engaged professionals, leading many educators to develop negative opinions about the training sessions. Professional development has traditionally been organized as a series of isolated skills, delivered through a series of onetime, one-way lecture-based training sessions that value efficiency over effectiveness and credit over depth of understanding.

The task force believes the system can be improved. In *It's Elementary!* the California Elementary Grades Task Force advocates a model of staff development based on intensive three- to four-week institutes that focus on the latest ideas in specific subject areas and their child-centered applications in classrooms. For as long as two years after the institute, participating educators acquire greater knowledge through a number of follow-up meetings and opportunities for professional collaboration and discussion. Only a few hundred educators can participate in these institutes in any one year. When the graduates return to their schools, however, they increase their understanding by applying what they have learned – not only in their own classrooms, but also as mentors, sharing knowledge with their colleagues to enrich instruction in their schools. The task force recommends a similar model of long-term professional development in Texas.

State and regional educators will play essential roles in this effort by developing and implementing a comprehensive plan for improving early childhood and elementary education in Texas. The task force believes that this plan should encompass an array of opportunities and formats for instruction. Its effectiveness will be tied to the recognition of varying sources of knowledge and expertise, not solely on the one-way delivery of technical assistance from state experts to schools. It is crucial that this system sustain in-depth opportunities for professional growth over time.

The foundation for planning this comprehensive system of professional development exists in the site-based decision making process in place on campuses across the state. By law, site based decision making ties curriculum, instruction, organization, and campus budgets to goals for student improvement developed by administrators, teachers, support staff, parents, and community members.

As it traveled the state, the task force was warned that educators could either implement developmentally appropriate practices or reach state standards of accountability. This narrow view of classroom practice can be broadened through site-based decision making, which addresses how children learn and grows out of a campus-wide consensus on leadership for student improvement. The task force calls on principals to fully implement site-based decision making. It calls on members of the site-based committees to develop school-wide views of campus improvement. Finally, it calls upon site-based decision making committees to incorporate knowledge of how children learn in the quest for improvement across the range of academic excellence indicators.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STAFF PREPARATION

For the Legislature:

1) Raise the average Texas teacher salary until it meets the projected national average salary in the 1997-98 school year.
2) Support efforts to develop a comprehensive professional development system for the state's early care providers and educators.

For the State Board of Education:

1) Amend certification rules to establish teacher certificates that combine knowledge of child development, pedagogy, and content area expertise, including reading. Assure that teachers in early childhood and primary programs possess specialized knowledge of developmentally appropriate approaches to the education of young children, through certification for new teachers and endorsement for veteran teachers.
2) Amend rules to develop an early childhood administrator's endorsement covering prekindergarten through primary grade-level programs.
3) Develop rules for an alternative track to an early childhood education certificate that awards credit for significant work experience within accredited early care and education programs.
4) Adopt state results measures for the preparation and certification of teachers and administrators in early childhood and elementary programs.

For the Texas Education Agency:

1) Develop an accountability system that assures that results-based standards for teacher education programs are consistent across the state's teacher education providers.
2) Develop a comprehensive, coordinated professional development system for early care and education practitioners in Texas.
3) Develop guidelines related to a system of professional preparation and certificate for teachers working in accredited early care and education settings.
4) Evaluate the effectiveness of the state's professional development system.

For Teacher Education Providers:

Higher Education Coordinating Board:

1) Develop rules for the articulation of academic credit between the requirements of two-year programs leading to an associate degree in child care and development and four-year or other training programs leading to a baccalaureate degree.
2) Develop rules within the early childhood endorsement that award credit, in either institutions of higher education or alternative teacher certification programs, for work experience within accredited child care and education programs.

Institutions of Higher Education:

1) Construct deeper connections between teacher education programs and practical learning in schools. Establish mechanisms that promote these connections by allowing higher education faculty to meet some promotion and tenure requirements through activities involving teachers and students in an elementary school.
2) Recruit greater numbers of minority and dual language individuals for careers in early childhood and elementary education.
3) Develop degree plans for the early childhood endorsement that award credit for work experience within accredited child care and education programs. Evaluate the

progress made by institutions in awarding credit for work experience.

4) Provide students in teacher preparation programs with instruction in teaching reading that provides structured, systematic, and multisensory approaches to phonemic and alphabetic awareness within a language- and literature-rich learning environment.

Alternative Teacher Certification Programs:

1) Recruit greater numbers of minority and dual language individuals for careers in early childhood and elementary education.
2) Award credit for work experience within accredited child care and education programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ONGOING TRAINING AND SUPPORT

For the Legislature:

1) Extend teacher contracts to increase professional planning and development time by five days each year to 20 days in the 1999 school year, while maintaining 180 instructional days.
2) Compensate staff for professional development days at no less than the average daily salary rate for Texas teachers.

For the Texas Education Agency:

1) Develop a comprehensive plan for improving early childhood and elementary student performance in Texas. Include a trainer-of-trainers model for supporting professional development in this plan. Focus professional development provided through this model on the *Policy Statement on Early Childhood and Elementary Education* and recommendations for implementing the policy. Coordinate the implementation of this plan with Regional Education Service Centers and the early childhood and elementary school network.
2) Provide funding to support the establishment and operation of a statewide early childhood and elementary school mentor network. The purpose of the network is to provide intensive, ongoing school-to-school professional development. Coordinate activities of the early childhood and elementary school network with other statewide professional development and school improvement initiatives.
3) Establish and coordinate professional development institutes that address developmentally appropriate instructional materials and technologies in various curricular areas.
4) Develop a range of professional development activities for instructional assistants working in the areas of early childhood and primary education.

For Regional Education Service Centers:

1) Promote and support the early childhood and elementary school mentor network.
2) Designate and train Education Service Center personnel to specialize in early childhood and elementary education and developmentally appropriate strategies for classroom practice.
3) Collaborate with districts to identify barriers to early childhood and elementary student achievement; provide training that focuses on professional growth.

For School Districts:

1) Provide teachers and administrators with time to strengthen their knowledge of child development and developmentally

appropriate early childhood and elementary education practices. Encourage intercampus collaboration among early childhood and elementary teachers and administrators.

2) Facilitate participation of administrators, teachers, and support staff in school/university partnerships.

3) Provide funding for professional development, in an amount equal to at least four percent of the salaries and wages of district personnel.

4) Structure district personnel assignments to assure that: 1) teachers at the highest level of training and qualification are available to each early childhood and elementary campus; and 2) each campus has the ability to provide teachers regularly scheduled blocks of time, outside of the personal planning period, for preparation, cross-campus planning, and collaboration.

5) Develop teacher and administrator appraisal instruments that accommodate and support developmentally appropriate early childhood and elementary education techniques and strategies.

6) Develop joint professional development opportunities for teachers and other staff across different early childhood programs.

7) Provide training to teachers and instructional assistants to support developmentally appropriate dual language education.

For Campuses:

1) Provide funding for professional development, in an amount equal to at least four percent of the salaries and wages of campus personnel. Use a campus-based needs assessment, conducted in conjunction with the campus site based decision-making committee, to identify professional development opportunities supported by these funds.

2) Participate in the state early childhood and elementary school mentor network.

3) Identify lead teachers to participate in statewide professional development institutes.

4) Assure that teachers have regularly scheduled blocks of time for preparation, collaboration and professional development. This time is in addition to, rather than in lieu of, required individual planning periods.

5) Based on a campus-based needs assessment, provide educators with ongoing professional development in assuring that every student will achieve success, confidence, and a firm foundation in reading. Include in this professional development strand the teaching of reading through systematic, and multisensory approaches that integrate phonemic awareness training and alphabetic knowledge with learning environments that are rich in language, literature, and meaning.

6) Provide opportunities for coordination and planning between early childhood and elementary educators and bilingual educators.

7) Provide opportunities for coordination, planning, and training between early childhood and elementary educators and educators in Head Start and other early childhood programs.

Family and Community Collaboration

The First National Education Goal

Goal One of the National Goals for Education states: "By the year 2000, all children in America will start school ready to learn." School readiness, however, is a changing concept. Social change and the dynamic real-world expectations for students and citizens are transforming the roles and responsibilities that families, schools, and communities have in assuring that each child will begin school ready to learn. School readiness is more than academic knowledge. Whether or not each child is ready for school depends upon their learning experiences and their physical health, self-confidence, and social competence.

The goal of school readiness for all children will be achieved through the mutual efforts of schools, families, and communities. Families have the primary responsibility for assuring their children's well-being and supporting their children's education. Families often cannot assume the sole responsibility for readying their children for school, however. Social change requires that we view readiness as a community effort. On the one hand, readiness means that families and communities must assure that children come to school healthy, safe, and supported with a wide range of enrichment and early learning experiences. On the other hand, readiness means that educators must assure that schools will promote the academic and personal growth of each child with child-centered programs and practices appropriate to individual students' strengths and needs. The task force believes that, increasingly, educators will be called upon to join community-wide efforts of family preservation so that children will have the opportunity to excel in their education.

Starting school ready to learn is a giant step down the path that leads to academic, personal, and social growth. Community-wide concern for children's achievement, however, must continue beyond the collaborative efforts established on behalf of the state's youngest children. Continued academic and personal success depends upon close work between schools and families and, in many instances, community organizations and health and human service agencies.

PARENT AND FAMILY PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION

Parent and family involvement is critical to school readiness and children's success in early childhood and elementary programs. Educators, parents, and community members emphasized the importance of parent and family involvement and its relationship to early childhood and elementary success at all of the task force site visits and public hearings. Parents and family members are a child's first and most influential teachers. The ultimate form of parent and family involvement in education is the day-by-day involvement of parents or family members in their children's education.

Parent and family involvement, crucial for children's achievement and optimum development, is also essential to the success of developmentally appropriate early childhood and elementary programs. At every public hearing the task force held around the state, educators called for greater parent and family involvement in education. It also heard parents and family members state the need for changes in school organization to permit them greater access to school decisions and operations. At several of the hearings, parents outlined the fundamental elements of child-centered educational practice described in this report. They voiced recommendations for placing greater emphasis on how children learn.

One way educators can help sustain high levels of parent and family involvement is to provide extensive and meaningful opportunities for parents, family members, teachers, and administrators to communicate about education – including both children's progress toward educational goals and the progress and status of the school. The task force believes that it is important for com-

Envisioning a Profamily School

☐ Engage children and their families in an active learning process in the school. This leads to positive learning outcomes and it nurtures a commitment to lifelong learning.

☐ Create flexible school schedules to meet parent needs. Not all classes at the same school need to run on the same schedule; some families would prefer an early schedule, some a later one.

☐ Provide before- and after-school programs on site or link them with other organizations in the community to provide students with safe travel between the school and the program.

☐ Reduce the stigma of public assistance for children from low-income families. Some schools have a separate lunch line for students getting free lunch; others provide some school programs only for children who can pay. A profamily school acknowledges the value of all families and allows all students access to all activities and services.

☐ Designate a "family advocate" for families to attend conferences with teachers, administrators, and special staff and link families to needed support services. In many schools, parents are outnumbered by school staff in meetings and conferences and school staff use professional terms and acronyms that are not readily understood by parents. The "family advocate" represents the interests of parents by asking questions, requesting clarification or explanation of terms, and making sure that parents understand and consent to any decisions that are made. The advocate also knows about other services that families need and can help families make connections.

☐ Provide translation for non-English-speaking parents at meetings, conferences, and children's performances. Translate written materials (school and district forms, newsletters, and letters from the principal) so that families can be informed fully about events and practices at the school.

☐ Introduce "Family Kindergarten," "Family Math," and other programs to familiarize parents with learning activities and strategies to reinforce school learning at home.

☐ Establish a parent hotline or a telephone tree so that families stay in touch with school events. Make sure that it is available to all parents, no matter what language they speak.

☐ Work with adult education agencies, community colleges, private industry councils, or local nonprofit groups to provide adult literacy, English as a second language, and employability skills training for family members at the school site. Schedule this training at the most convenient time for parents to participate, provide child care for younger children, and furnish supervised homework sessions for older ones.

Source: Together We Can: A Guide for Crafting a Profamily System of Education and Human Services. *Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1993.*

munication between families and educators to accommodate the languages spoken in the homes served by the school. Educators in Tyler ISD recommended that family liaison positions be established in schools to help ease communication and foster greater understanding between families and schools. Personnel in these positions could assist the school in communicating with parents and families and assist parents and families when problems arose with their children's education. Other roles could include acting on the campus decision-making committee and establishing parent and family outreach activities, such as scheduling parent-educator meetings at the school and at sites around the community.

A second way educators can help sustain high levels of parent and family involvement is by implementing parent and family education programs. These programs can provide a foundation for reaching two goals of early childhood and elementary educators: building support in the community for developmentally appropriate practices and creating the conditions for academic and personal growth within the family. Parent and family education not only focuses on the child but also on what parents and families can do to nurture his or her success; it also focuses on the family as an essential part of community health, safety, and prosperity.

Focus on the Child

Educators in Fort Worth and Humble ISD's praised the Parents as Teachers Program in their discussions with the task force. Parents as Teachers is a home-school partnership designed to give children from birth through age three the best possible start in life and to support parents in their roles as the children's first teachers. It is in place in 55 school districts in 40 communities across the state. Fort Worth ISD has the largest program in the state, reaching 252 families and 293 children. Humble ISD has expanded the program to reach families with children from birth through age five. The program includes home visits; group meetings and seminars on such topics as nutrition, home safety, language development, positive discipline, and toy making; parent resource centers housed on elementary campuses; information and referral services; and developmental screenings.

Focus on the Family

Even Start, serving low-income families, provides support for families with young children. The Even Start program seeks to improve children's academic and personal growth by strengthening the family. There are three components to the program:

- ☐ adult education, including literacy, job readiness, and employability skills;
- ☐ early care and education for children with parents participating in adult education classes; and
- ☐ parent education, promoting effective parenting skills and child development education for parents with children from birth through age seven.

Transportation is provided for families participating in the program.

Currently, 35 Even Start programs are provided by school districts and nonprofit agencies across Texas.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARENT AND FAMILY PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION

For the State Board of Education:

1) Adopt a state policy statement on parent involvement in education.

For the Texas Education Agency:

1) Implement a state parent involvement initiative to support parenting skills of mothers and fathers and enhance their participation in the education of their children.

For Regional Education Service Centers:

1) Provide technical assistance to school districts seeking to implement more extensive parent involvement and education programs.
2) Organize annual parent-school-community conferences which highlight effective strategies and innovations in improving parent and family involvement in education.

For School Districts:

1) Fund "family advocate" positions to serve each school or vertical team of schools in the district.
2) Provide translation services for school materials and meetings for non-English speaking parents and families.
3) Implement programs to familiarize parents with learning activities and strategies to reinforce learning at home.
4) Implement parent education programs for parents of children from birth through age three.
5) Work with community media outlets, such as local cable television franchises, to provide greater access to parent education materials.

For Campuses:

1) Communicate, both orally and in writing, with parents in their primary language.
2) Offer opportunities for educators and parents to collectively develop strategies, activities, and resources to support linguistic and cultural diversity in schools.
3) Exchange information with parents about the educational program on each campus and the progress that their children are making toward educational goals.
4) Work with community education, health, and human service teams to conduct regular home visits and meetings with parents and families served on campus.
5) Schedule at least one parent conference each semester.

For Parents:

1) Recognize that the ultimate form of parent involvement in education is personal involvement in the education of children.
2) Provide early childhood and elementary children with language-rich home environments: speak frequently to your children, listen carefully to their responses, answer questions, and either read to them or have them read to you every day.

For Employers:

1) Provide parents of early childhood and elementary-aged children with at least two parenting days per year, with pay, to enable parents to visit their children's classroom, consult with teachers, and assist in classroom activities.

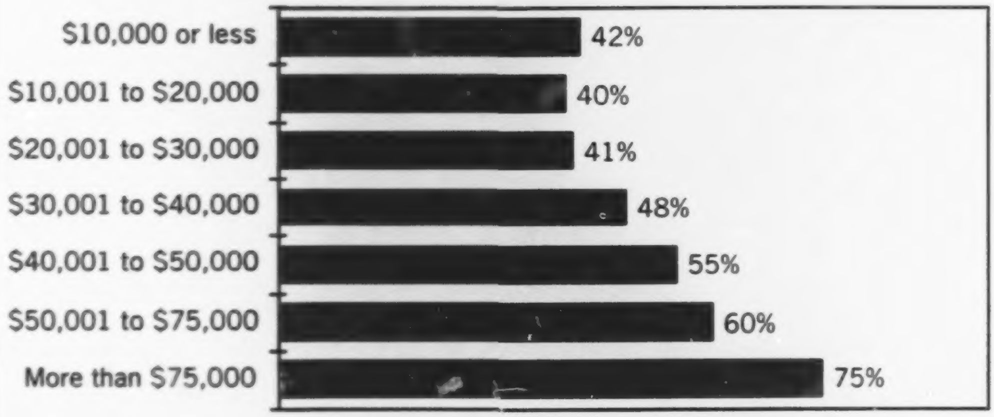
EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

Early care and education is a crucial component of the nation's educational goal of school readiness. Traditionally, young children and their families have been served in two types of early care and education programs: early education and development programs, providing social and cognitive enrichment; and child welfare programs, providing protective and custody services. Income often determines program access. Seventy-five percent of the three- to five-year-old children from families earning more than $75,000 per year are enrolled in enrichment programs. Less than half of the three- to five-year-old children whose families earn less than $10,000 are enrolled in these programs. Child welfare programs have almost exclusively been the domain of children in poverty. Researchers and policy makers, while acknowledging the importance of these programs for children and families in need, question whether they provide impoverished children and families an equitable foundation for high quality academic and personal development.

Quality early care and education programs do matter. For nearly three decades, the High/Scope Perry Pre-School Study has followed the progress into adulthood of economically disadvantaged children who were enrolled in a high quality early childhood education program when they were three and four years old. The children who participated in the study when they were three and four are now 27-year-old adults. Four main findings can be summarized from the study.

- Over the years, children who participated in the quality program showed significantly higher levels of academic achievement than similar children who did not have access to quality early childhood enrichment.
- Program results were not limited to academic success. Children's participation in high quality early education programs at ages three and four created the framework for successful adulthood.
- The skills and attitudes developed in the programs allowed the children to interact positively with other people and tasks

Percent of 3-to-5-Year-Olds in U.S. Preschools, by Annual Family Income



Source: National Education Association.

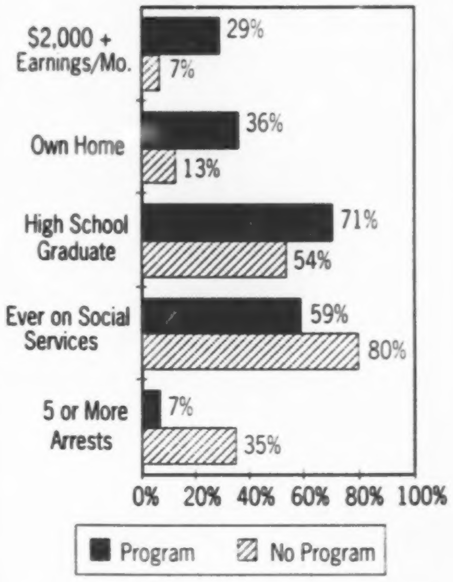
and contributed to their academic and community success.

- The lifetime economic benefits to the program participants, their families, and their communities far outweigh the economic cost of their program.

There are three avenues to early care and education for low income children and families in Texas: Head Start, Child Care Management Services (CCMS) registered providers, and prekindergarten programs offered in public schools. Head Start is a federally funded comprehensive early care and education program that provides economically disadvantaged children aged three to five with interdisciplinary developmental education and a range of health and human services including nutrition, medical, dental, and mental health care. In fiscal year 1993, approximately 49,000 children were enrolled in Head Start programs. Participating adults are provided employment training and child care services. The programs are coordinated by school districts, community action agencies, and community institutions such as churches and child care providers.

High/Scope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 27

The chart compares participants in the High/Scope Perry Preschool program to a control group that did not have access to quality early care.



CCMS providers represent a variety of early care and education programs and facilities. The program is coordinated at the state level by the Texas Department of Human Services and at the regional level by CCMS fiscal agents. The program coordinates the flow of health and human services funds for qualifying children enrolled in participating care and education programs. In fiscal year 1993, the CCMS program served approximately 60,000 children.

Public school prekindergarten programs are in place in more than 600 of the 1,050 school districts in Texas. Three- and four-year-old children qualify for prekindergarten classes if they have limited proficiency in English or if they come from families with incomes below the poverty level. In the 1992-93 school year, approximately 95,000 children were enrolled in these programs. Instructional offerings in prekindergarten programs are based on the state essential elements of curriculum adopted by the State Board of Education.

These programs are underutilized. Limited program funds, lack of universal full-day programs, limited facilities, lack of coordinated eligibility requirements for different funding streams, limited transportation services, and lack of family and community awareness all keep the number of children served by these programs below the number of children in need. Governor Ann Richards' 1992 progress report on the National Education Goals states that the Head Start program in Texas serves only 10 percent of the eligible students. CCMS programs reach approximately the same percentage of eligible children.

Prekindergarten programs are in place in nearly two-thirds of the school districts in Texas.

Collaboration for Early Care and Education

To help extend service to eligible children and families, and to assure that all children receive developmentally appropriate early learning opportunities the Texas legislature amended §16.003 of the *Texas Education Code* in 1989. The legislation required the commissioner of education and the commissioner of human services to:

- monitor and evaluate the developmental appropriateness of the programs serving state's three- to five-year-olds;

Childhood Is Fragile in Today's Texas

Assuring that each child begins school ready to learn is made difficult by the changing demographics and increasing diversity of our population.

- The population of Texas is among the youngest in the nation. Ten percent of today's Texans are less than six years old.
- In 1990, just over 53 percent of Texas preschool children — numbering nearly 4 million — had either both or their only parent in the work force outside the home. This means that at least 35 percent of the families in Texas need child care at least part of the day. Yet less than one-quarter of these children receive care in a licensed or registered program.
- Texas is one of the most culturally diverse states in the nation. The 1990 census reported that 51 percent of children under three years of age in the state were minorities. The 1990 figures indicate that just over 28 percent of Texas children aged 5-17 do not speak English at home. There is a growing number of language minority children whose first language is not Spanish. In schools, minority children have made up the majority of Texas student population since the 1990-91 school year.
- The economic picture of Texas has changed. Between 1983-84 and 1991-92, the state went from the 17th wealthiest in the nation to the 17th poorest, based on per capita income.
- One quarter of all Texas children live in poverty. Poverty rates are almost twice as high for African-American and Hispanic children.
- The 1992 Texas progress report on the educational goals stated that our state ranks 43rd nationally in its services for families and children.
- Families in need of health and human services must cope with a lack of coordination between eligibility requirements and programs.
- The number of eligible Texas mothers and children not served by the Women Infants and Children (WIC) program increased from 53 percent in 1989 to 65 percent in 1992. This increase occurred in spite of the fact that increases in WIC program funding increased the number of mothers and children receiving food and services in the program by 150,000 over the same four-year period.
- More than one million children in the state do not have health insurance.
- Only 30 percent of the preschool-aged children in Texas receive all of their immunizations, a rate that leads the nation and rivals many third-world countries.

Costs of Services Emphasize the Value of Prevention

$1 on childhood immunizations	⬅ OR ➡	$10 in later medical costs
$1 on comprehensive prenatal care for women through Medicaid	⬅ OR ➡	$3.38 in later health costs
$1 for quality preschool education	⬅ OR ➡	$4.75 for later special education, crime, welfare, and other costs
$850 for one year of education focused on prevention	⬅ OR ➡	$4,000 for the cost of a single repeated grade
$4,500 per family for family preservation services	⬅ OR ➡	$10,000 for one year of foster care for one child

Adapted from Children's Defense Fund (1991). The State of America's Children.

- ☐ investigate the feasibility of coordinating state-funded prekindergarten programs with Head Start programs and programs funded with other government funds;
- ☐ evaluate the potential for using existing early care and education program facilities as prekindergarten sites; and
- ☐ integrate, to the greatest extent possible, services, staff, and facilities for early care and education, prekindergarten, and Head Start programs.

The task force urges state policy makers, local educators, and early care and education program administrators and service providers to develop collaborative working arrangements that will facilitate integration of early childhood programs. In Houston and Fort Bend ISD's, the Child Care Council of Greater Houston manages after-school programs for elementary school-aged and homeless children. The council works closely with the districts and area early care providers, aligning curriculum goals and instructional activities of the after-school program with the campus at which the care services are provided. At the Arlington public hearing, a representative of the Texas Department of Human Services told the task force that child care and education providers must engage in networking and collaboration to reduce redundancy in services for young children.

In Tyler ISD, the task force received testimony from a Child Care Management Services administrator stating that increased networking and communications between public school educators and early care and education providers could clarify expectations that each group has for the

School-Based Child Care Standards Adopted by the National Association of Elementary School Principals

School-based child care is in demand not only for children in early care and prekindergarten programs, but also for children at the early childhood and elementary grade levels. The National Association of Elementary School Principals has developed quality standards for these services in a publication called *Standards for Quality School-Age Child Care*. The standards advocate child-to-staff ratios of 10–1 for children under age six and 12–1 for children over six years of age. They establish guidelines for facilities, activities, nutrition and school-parent communication.

other and lead to a more informed view of the growth and development of children matriculating from one program to the other. According to NAEYC, the greater the variance in developmental expectations and teaching practices between programs, the more stressful the adjustment will be for young children and their families. Developmentally appropriate care and education programs facilitate smoother and more successful transitions for young children. In addition, ongoing communication and cooperation between public school educators, early care and education providers, and parents will facilitate young children's transitions.

The task force holds no illusions about the difficulty of coordinating facilities and funds to better serve young children. State-level efforts to use average daily attendance allotments for prekindergarten students to draw down federal funds for extending early care programs have met with neither widespread application nor success in local districts and communities. In addition, varying eligibility requirements for programs and services hinder local collaborative efforts.

The task force recommends that districts work with community agencies and institutions to help families with young children gain access to early care and education services. Coordination of programs with before- and after-school child care services is an important part of the school-community collaborative effort, particularly for campuses and districts implementing flexible, extended day, or year-round schedules. Arlington ISD has schools with both nine-month and year-round schedules on the same campus. Child care providers serve both sets of families. Full day care services are offered during the intercession periods for children on the year-round calendar. Children on a nine-month schedule provided transportation to child care facilities from the elementary campus. Both arrangements allow families and children to maintain consistent schedules throughout the year.

The task force calls on educators and early care providers to give high priority to the coordination of programs with before- and after-school care services, so that the daily schedules of prekindergarten, Head Start, CCMS, and other early care and education programs match the needs of young working families.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COORDINATING EARLY CARE PROGRAMS WITH PUBLIC EDUCATION

For the Federal Government:

1) Expand funding for the Head Start program so that, by 1997, all eligible three- and four-year-old children are served.
2) Expand eligibility for the Head Start program so that families in transition into the work force can remain eligible for Head Start services as their incomes rise above the poverty level.
3) Authorize states to establish uniform developmentally appropriate standards of program quality and student performance for all early childhood education programs, including Head Start.

For the Legislature:

1) Fund full-day kindergarten programs.
2) Expand funding for state-funded early care and education so that all eligible families can have access to these services.

For the State Board of Education:

1) Develop facilities standards for district prekindergarten programs.

For the Texas Education Agency:

1) Work with the Texas Department of Human Services and the Governor's Head Start Collaboration Project to implement specific strategies pursuant to §16.003 of the *Texas Education Code*, to provide technical assistance and enhance local collaboration between Head Start, prekindergarten, and child care programs.

2) Work to align eligibility requirements for early care and education programs and services. Participate in interagency letters of agreement among agencies involved with serving children in early childhood and elementary education programs.

3) Assist school districts in collaborative efforts with community-based early care and education providers.

For Regional Education Service Centers:

1) Establish regional collaborative networks of school district and community-based early care and education providers.

For School Districts:

1) Work with representatives of social agencies, spiritual institutions, businesses, and other community institutions to help parents and families gain access to high quality school readiness activities and programs. Establish, with early care and education providers, a community network to coordinate program resources and facilities; communicate expectations of early care and education program outcomes.

2) Coordinate before- and after-school care arrangements, using district resources and community care providers, to better serve young children and families.

3) Provide early care and education services for children of parents receiving education services offered by the district, such as teenaged parents and parents enrolled in programs such as Even Start.

4) Establish prekindergarten programs that increase the use of Limited English Proficient prekindergarten students' primary languages.

5) Expand the eligibility for prekindergarten enrollment to include children of parents willing to pay tuition for these services.

For Campuses:

1) Communicate with early care and education providers to gain a more complete picture of the children entering public school, facilitate their transition to campus-based early childhood programs, and provide teachers and counselors with greater documentation about the developmental stages of the children they will serve.

2) Invite community early care and education providers to participate on the site-based decision making teams.

For Communities:

1) Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment that focuses on the ability of community institutions, including the school system, to meet the early care and education needs of children and families.

For Libraries:

1) Develop books and other media that promote school readiness among families and children involved with early childhood and elementary education.

For Community Early Care and Education Providers:

1) Provide early care and education settings that are developmentally appropriate and educationally sound.

2) Measure the quality of programs by assessing their developmental appropriate-

ness; assess program outcomes using multiple procedures that are consistent with the principles of developmentally appropriate education. Communicate the results to families served by the programs.

3) Share information with early childhood and elementary teachers, administrators, and support staff.

4) Pursue resource sharing arrangements and partnerships with school district early childhood and elementary programs.

For Families:

1) Organize and participate in early care and education parent-teacher organizations to increase support for children in these programs and their families.

LINKING EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

During the task force public hearing in Socorro ISD, Blanca Enriquez, the director of the El Paso County Head Start Program, urged task force members to consider four recommendations for improving school readiness:

- invest in early care and education programs in order to avoid remediation in later years;
- provide comprehensive services to meet the health and social needs of children;
- promote linkages between and among day care providers, public schools, and health and social service providers; and
- build meaningful, participatory parent and family involvement programs.

In *Quality, Equity, Accountability: the State Board of Education Long-Range Plan for Public Education, 1991-1995,* the State Board of Education calls for the statewide coordination of health, mental health, and social services with education. The board seeks this action as part of a multifaceted approach to ensuring that all students will achieve their full potential. Health and human services support of children and families are crucial components of school readiness. They are important elements of successful education at the elementary levels as well. In Tyler ISD, educators told the task force that a coordinated effort to identify and address health and human service needs in early childhood could lead to higher student achievement and a reduction in such school problems as grade retention in the later years of school.

Educators and community members across the state are implementing a number of approaches to coordinating health and human services with education. The task force applauds these efforts, stressing that community-wide approaches to education and service should be developed locally, based on an assessment of local needs and conditions.

One local coordinated services program visited by task force members was the School of the Future in Dallas ISD. The School of the Future is a community-based, multifaceted approach to coordinating education and health and human services developed by the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health in conjunction with five Texas school districts. The Dallas School of the Future serves children and families in neighborhoods around three elementary schools. The program in Dallas includes:

- a full-day Head Start program;
- site-based decision making at the elementary schools with Assistance and Consultation Teams that seek to improve the overall functioning of the school through a focus on the psychological well-being of children and families;
- innovative communication with neighborhood residents, such as free cable television hookups to families of one of the schools, so that children and families have greater access to educational and community television programming;
- coordination of parent and family education and literacy programs with early care and education; and
- health and wellness programs, including a primary health care clinic in the neighborhood served by the schools, and a health promotion project that targets

aerobic fitness and the reduction of preventable disease.

The task force supports local efforts to extend preventive and primary medical care to young children and families in need. In Corpus Christi ISD, educators urged schools to provide greater leadership in community responses to increasing needs for medical, dental, nutritional, and human services. In Humble ISD, educators expressed concern to the task force over the impact that the country's health care crisis has had on the roles and responsibilities of the school nurse. Humble educators stated that school nurses are now called upon to cope with many of the medical and family problems that were formerly handled by doctors and questioned whether present nurse-to-student ratios and training requirements were sufficient to meet changing demand. In Houston ISD, the task force heard a proposal for addressing student and family health needs through a campus adopt-a-doctor program. In the conceptual model described to the task force, a doctor would adopt a single campus and provide primary medical care to campus children and families in need.

Early childhood and elementary school counselors can play a pivotal role in coordinating and extending services to children and their families. The task force believes that counseling programs work best when they are centered around a guidance component that gears teaching of interpersonal skills to stages of children's development and provides coordinated responsive services, individual student intervention, and community and system support.

The task force supports efforts to restructure school counseling programs to provide greater emphasis on preventive services and a focus on student achievement of educational goals, rather than reactive services with a concomitant focus on student and school crises. The Elementary At-Risk Pilot Programs established by the 71st Texas Legislature highlighted the effectiveness of preventive counseling services, particularly when the efforts of the school counselor are coordinated with community social workers and parent education programs. Evaluation results of the pilot, published by the Texas Education Agency in *Expanding the Boundaries of School*, indicate that coordinated, preventive counseling programs improved grade-level promotion rates and provided families with a stronger connection to services offered in the community.

Early childhood and elementary education programs work best when implemented as a partnership that addresses the goals of developmentally appropriate, high quality education for all children.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ESTABLISHING SCHOOL-FAMILY-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

For the Federal Government:

1) Provide regulatory and financial incentives for education, health, and human service providers to establish collaborative programs.

2) Decategorize funding to increase cohesion and comprehensiveness of education, health, and human services to eligible children and families.

For the Legislature:

1) Establish a fund to provide coordinated health and human services to eligible students and families.

2) Implement the Texas Children's Health Plan, developed by the Texas Health Policy Task Force, to establish a statewide system for financing and ensuring access to high quality, comprehensive health care for all children, from birth through age 18 and for all pregnant women.

3) Develop a state-level interagency group to provide technical assistance with the establishment of school-linked health service programs. Such a group could link systems to funding sources, assist in developing programs, and document program outcomes.

4) Appropriate funds to the Texas Department of Health for start-up and technical assistance to schools seeking to start health services programs.

5) Increase the flexibility of health and human services eligibility requirements so that children and families who qualify for one program can access services from several agencies.

6) Increase funding for child care services targeting collaborative services with school district prekindergarten and teen parent education programs.

For the State Board of Education:

1) Develop a strategy for encouraging school-family-community partnerships, drawing upon a wide range of resources and facilities to assure excellence and equity for all students.

For the Texas Education Agency:

1) Work with other state agencies to develop guidelines for evaluating the effectiveness of school-linked health and community services.

2) Develop strategies, in cooperation with school districts and health and human service agencies, for procuring and distributing available noneducational federal funds to support and expand services to early childhood and elementary students and their families.

For State Agencies:

1) Coordinate services and resources to best respond to community needs in Texas.

2) Coordinate management information systems to share information and develop the social services data bank into a true case management system that is based on prevention, rather than crisis intervention.

For the Texas Department of Health:

1) Provide technical assistance and support to schools seeking to start up health services programs.

For Regional Education Service Centers:

1) Work with county and regional entities to plan and develop effective community service delivery systems that complement campus and district services.

For School Districts:

1) Initiate and collaborate with efforts to alter funding mechanisms and program eligibility standards to create incentives for local programs to collaborate in providing services.
2) Adopt policies that facilitate coordination of education, health, and community services through a focus on child development, family preservation, and community renewal.
3) Coordinate resources and facilities with community health and social agencies to meet the needs of coordinated education, health, and community services.
4) Fund and implement the Comprehensive School Guidance Program on each campus serving early childhood and elementary students; support campus counselors with administrative assistance in order to allow them to more effectively implement the Comprehensive School Guidance Program.
5) Provide resources for professional development on establishing community health and human services networks.
6) Evaluate the effectiveness of school-linked coordinated services.
7) Provide facilities and funding for school-based after-school care programs.

For Campuses:

1) Conduct a needs assessment to determine the extent of student and family needs for coordinated school-linked health services programs.
2) Based on the needs assessment, conduct professional development, through the campus planning and improvement process, on coordinating community health and human services with education.
3) Establish teams to oversee coordination of education, community, and health services; respond to children and families in need of services; and reflect on current standards of service delivery in education, health, and human services.
4) Based on the needs assessment, provide school-based child care programs, either through the district or through private vendors, that follow the quality standards for after-school care established by the National Association of Elementary School Principals, including child-adult ratios of 10-1 for children under six and 12-1 for those over six and allowing children to choose from a range of high interest activities.

For Communities:

1) Conduct a comprehensive assessment of how well community education, health, and human services institutions are meeting the needs of children and families. Use the results of the assessment to initiate a coordinated approach to education, health, and human services planning.

For Health and Social Service Agencies and Community Institutions:

1) Work with school districts and campuses to provide comprehensive support, including health, family support, and developmentally appropriate child care and education services to children and families.
2) Work with school districts and campuses to implement preventive health and wellness programs.

Implementation Steps

Developmentally appropriate early childhood and elementary education provides the foundation for a child's high level of academic achievement, personal and social growth, and, ultimately, full participation in society. The *Policy Statement on Early Childhood and Elementary Education* and the recommendations in this report are intended to improve the education of young children in Texas by focusing on how children learn and by creating learning environments that combine academic excellence for all students with respect for individual development. Implementing these recommendations will require commitment and planning at all levels of our state's education system.

Build Educational Excellence and Equity

The span of years and range of development served in early childhood and elementary education is greater than any other level of the Texas public education system. As it travelled the state, the task force witnessed a great deal of success and heard a number of concerns for education at the early childhood and elementary levels. The diversity of the programs offered in the early grades, the use of technology, the richness of the curriculum, the focus on achievement and excellence, and the levels of parent and community involvement in many schools are elements of early childhood and elementary education that the task force wishes to nurture and support.

At the same time, we are challenging our children as never before. High stakes accountability and increasing real world expectations create nearly irresistible temptations to match children to skill-based curriculum that is "pushed" from the upper elementary into the early childhood years.

The boundaries of early childhood and elementary education have expanded as the households and communities served by early childhood and elementary educators have changed. The diversity of the children in Texas elementary schools; the range of enrichment and early education experiences they possess as they enter prekindergarten, kindergarten, and first grade classrooms; and the complexity of early care and education services and facilities all create the need for a system of education that has at its center the child. Developmentally appropriate education is the framework for implementing that system, with its focus on the stages of child development and individual interests and understanding; emphasis on the richness of cultural and linguistic diversity; and recognition of the value of the social nature of learning.

Provide Professional Development

The recommendations presented in this report emphasize the importance of professional development and training for teachers, administrators, care providers, and support staff. The task force calls upon the legislature to provide financial support for this enhancement of the state's most important institution and challenges campuses, school districts, the Texas Education Agency, Regional Education Service Centers, and the state's community colleges and universities to develop programs to increase the abilities of early childhood and elementary educators to fulfill their responsibilities in child-centered educational settings.

Create a Network to Support Early Childhood and Elementary Restructuring

Central to this idea of professional development is the creation of the Texas Early Childhood and Elementary Network. The network should provide early childhood and elementary educators, service providers, and allied professionals collaborative forums in which to develop methods to creating developmentally appropriate learning environments. The network should include schools and care providers of all types and sizes. It should involve vertical teams of principals, teachers, counselors, and support staff, as well as early care administrators and service providers. The task force calls upon the Texas Education Agency to support collaborative, long-term, and campus-based staff development through the network.

Communicate and Coordinate Early Childhood and Elementary Education Reform

The task force also calls upon the Texas Education Agency to support developmentally appropriate early childhood and elementary education through the Division of Elementary, Middle, and High School Education. The task force encourages that division to strengthen the effort of schools engaged in restructuring by activities such as:

- ☐ creating strong collaborative relationships between public education and early care and education service providers;
- ☐ pursuing funding opportunities to support networking and collaborative activities;
- ☐ creating a source book that contains description and contact information on effective early childhood and elementary programs and practices;
- ☐ publishing a network newsletter; and
- ☐ providing field services that are coordinated at the state and regional levels.

The task force urges the legislature, the State Board of Education, and the Texas Education Agency to support the implementation of child-centered early childhood and elementary programs through school reform initiatives that are coordinated and consistent. State mandates and efforts to restructure schools should focus first and foremost on children's learning and foster, for each child, optimum levels of growth and development.

Establish Local and State Conferences on Early Childhood and Elementary Education

In presenting its policy statement, report, and recommendations, the Task Force on Early Childhood and Elementary Education establishes only a beginning. It is essential that the dialog that produced these documents will continue and expand with support from the State Board of Education, the Texas Education Agency, Regional Education Service Centers, school districts, campuses, professional associations, and parents and community members. The task force calls upon these groups to continue the discussion on developmentally appropriate early childhood and elementary education.

The *Policy Statement on Early Childhood and Elementary Education* and recommendations from the task force focus on children as active learners and link high levels of academic performance to well-rounded personal and social growth. The task force encourages Texans to create the conditions that nurture that growth and to assure that each child will achieve the goals of early childhood and elementary education.

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COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

TITLE VI, CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964; THE MODIFIED COURT ORDER, CIVIL ACTION 5281, FEDERAL DISTRICT COURT, EASTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS, TYLER DIVISION

Reviews of local education agencies pertaining to compliance with Title VI Civil Rights Act of 1964 and with specific requirements of the Modified Court Order, Civil Action No. 5281, Federal District Court, Eastern District of Texas, Tyler Division are conducted periodically by staff representatives of the Texas Education Agency. These reviews cover at least the following policies and practices:

(1) acceptance policies on student transfers from other school districts;

(2) operation of school bus routes or runs on a nonsegregated basis;

(3) nondiscrimination in extracurricular activities and the use of school facilities;

(4) nondiscriminatory practices in the hiring, assigning, promoting, paying, demoting, reassigning, or dismissing of faculty and staff members who work with children;

(5) enrollment and assignment of students without discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin;

(6) nondiscriminatory practices relating to the use of a student's first language; and

(7) evidence of published procedures for hearing complaints and grievances.

In addition to conducting reviews, the Texas Education Agency staff representatives check complaints of discrimination made by a citizen or citizens residing in a school district where it is alleged discriminatory practices have occurred or are occurring.

Where a violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act is found, the findings are reported to the Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education.

If there is a direct violation of the Court Order in Civil Action No. 5281 that cannot be cleared through negotiation, the sanctions required by the Court Order are applied.

TITLE VII, CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964 AS AMENDED BY THE EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY ACT OF 1972; EXECUTIVE ORDERS 11246 AND 11375; EQUAL PAY ACT OF 1964; TITLE IX, EDUCATION AMENDMENTS; REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 AS AMENDED; 1974 AMENDMENTS TO THE WAGE-HOUR LAW EXPANDING THE AGE DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT ACT OF 1967; VIETNAM ERA VETERANS READJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE ACT OF 1972 AS AMENDED; IMMIGRATION REFORM AND CONTROL ACT OF 1986; AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT OF 1990; AND THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1991.

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Texas Education Agency
Austin, Texas

January 1994

detailed discussion of the information contained in this executive summary may be
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First Impressions / Primeras Impresiones: Report of the Task Force on Early Childhood and Elementary Education

is dedicated to the memory of

DR. EMMETT J. CONRAD

Member, State Board of Education, District 13
October 1984 - April 1993

Report of the Task Force on Early Childhood and Elementary Education

Executive Summary

The Task Force on Early Childhood and Elementary Education was created by the State Board of Education in January 1993. The board directed the task force to (1) examine the condition of the state's children between birth and entrance into middle school; (2) develop a policy that guarantees a high quality, integrated system of early childhood and elementary education in Texas; and (3) formulate recommendations for implementing the policy goals.

The task force defined early childhood education programs as those serving children in early care, prekindergarten, and the primary grade levels. Elementary education programs extend from primary until entrance into middle school.

The 37 members of the task force included members of the State Board of Education, teachers, counselors, principals, administrators, members of local school boards, representatives of state government, and appointees from organizations representing parents, early care and education providers, higher education faculty, and the business community. Through its review of research, consideration of expert presentations, discussions with educators, and participation in public hearings across the state, the task force has developed a framework for a new system of early childhood and elementary education, one that is focused on how children learn and characterized by collaboration and mutual effort toward achieving challenging and highly valued goals.

The Need for Change

The task force found that the current system of early childhood and elementary education is struggling to meet the challenges of childhood in today's Texas. The population served by today's schools has undergone dramatic change. During the 1992-93 school year, ethnic and racial minority groups combined to make up the majority of students in grades prekindergarten through six; just over half of the early childhood and elementary students in Texas were categorized as economically disadvantaged.

Too often, today's public schools take this diverse and changing group of children and attempt to fit them into an organizational structure that is more than two generations old. In this structure, students who do not perform according to group norms are tracked into low ability academic groups. Students who do not attain established standards of performance within nine months are either placed in transitional classes or retained in grade, practices which research increasingly indicts as leading predictors of dropping out of school. Students are retained in disproportionate numbers at the end of first grade. Almost 27,000 Texas first graders were retained at the end of the 1991-92 school year. This first-grade retention rate of 10.3 percent is twice the overall retention rate of 5.2 percent.

In many cases, schools have responded to calls for change issued at the local, state, and federal levels by implementing practices that hinder, rather than support, children's educational success. As lawmaking bodies tie accountability to student performance on standardized tests, many schools resort to rote drill and remediation methods that yield quick results on those tests. In an attempt to cover the state curriculum and prepare students in the lower grades for the tests they will face in later years, schools "push" the elementary curriculum down to the early childhood and primary levels. During their visits to schools across the state, task force members met with educators and parents who strongly objected to the practice of subjecting young children to standardized testing, yet knew of few alternatives for monitoring student progress toward educational goals.

In an effort to address the issues of diversity, retention, inappropriate curriculum and assessment, and the changing nature of schooling, the task force has articulated a new vision of early childhood and elementary education, based on developmentally appropriate educational practices. The task force defines **developmentally appropriate early childhood and elementary education** as programs and practices that (1) focus on the principles and stages of child development; (2) foster individual interests and understanding; (3) value cultural and linguistic diversity; and (4) recognize the social nature of learning. Developmentally appropriate education does not mean lower expectations of student performance. It does not sacrifice academic quality or intellectual rigor.

Developmentally appropriate practices are based upon the principle that children construct knowledge from active experience with their physical and social environments. They are built on a vision of education that ensures that every child will be prepared for future academic and personal success through a strong foundation in reading and mastery of educational goals. They expand opportunities for learning by accommodating each child's culture, language, and learning style.

By calling for change, the task force seeks to instill a new energy in the hearts and minds of all Texans who hold a stake in early childhood and elementary education. Specifically, our vision for the reorganized early childhood or elementary school in Texas includes the following components.

- ☐ **Developmentally appropriate curriculum** which uses flexible grouping of students on a continuous basis for active, participatory involvement and presentation of knowledge through interdisciplinary themes and units.
- ☐ **School calendars** which permit flexible and extended-year schedules to accommodate each child's learning style and pace.

THE OLD SYSTEM	THE NEW VISION
Children adapt to a pre-organized school structure.	Schools are organized to accommodate active student involvement in learning.
Learning occurs in distinct, nine-month intervals; students not meeting expectations are remediated and/or retained.	A flexible calendar offers abundant time for acceleration and enrichment; early prevention and intervention ensure that children are not allowed to fall behind from the beginning.
Learning is organized and regulated in terms of seat time.	Curriculum allows for continuous progress; content meets rigorous standards; it is relevant, engaging, and meaningful to children.
Teachers impart knowledge through lecture.	Educators facilitate learning, organizing learning around student experiences, strengths, and educational goals.
Grouping is by ability or age.	Flexible grouping occurs across age, ability and achievement levels; teachers reconfigure groups based on learning needs.
Evaluation of student and school performance are based solely on standardized test results.	Evaluation is continuous, using multiple performance-based assessments to inform instruction and evaluate programs.
Education system is separate from other community systems and services.	Education system collaborates with other community systems and services to serve all children and their families.

☐ **Abundant opportunities** for each child to attain high standards of achievement through acceleration and enrichment of all learning activities on a continuous basis.

☐ **Performance-based assessments** that demonstrate continuous student progress toward academic standard, and allow continuous movement through the system by the students upon attainment of benchmark standards.

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

To achieve this new vision, the Task Force on Early Childhood and Elementary Education recommends the following strategies for the implementation of developmentally appropriate early childhood and elementary programs in Texas:

☐ Nurture the full intellectual, physical, social, and emotional growth of each child. Recognize that each child's growth occurs over developmental stages, tempered by a learning style and pace that is individually unique.

☐ Provide developmentally appropriate curriculum that is age-appropriate, interdisciplinary, enriched to support each child's academic and personal growth, and connected to clearly articulated state and local educational goals.

☐ Support educational success with a firm foundation in reading. Assure that reading instruction is age- and individually appropriate and supports the complex interactions between reader and text. Structure the reading curriculum to provide explicit and systematic integration of phonemic awareness training and understanding of alphabetic principles within meaning-based literature- and language-rich learning environments.

☐ Group students flexibly to support individual learning needs. Do not use past academic performance or perceived ability to track students.

☐ Eliminate retention. Employ curriculum, instructional practices, and schedules and calendars that overcome the need to retain students in grade.

☐ Provide a flexible, seamless learning continuum from prekindergarten to grade 12.

☐ Implement performance-based assessment strategies that adhere to developmentally appropriate principles of curriculum and instruction.

☐ Prepare early childhood and elementary educators with programs that integrate knowledge of pedagogy and child development.

☐ Support early childhood and elementary educators and students with student-staff ratios that are predicated upon the developmental needs of children.

☐ Actively solicit meaningful parent and family participation in the education of their children.

☐ Coordinate early care programs, school- and community-based early childhood education programs, and elementary programs to assure a seamless transition between programs and continuous educational progress for each child.

☐ Establish partnerships with health and human service agencies, child care providers, community organizations, cultural institutions, and local businesses to meet a range of individual and community educational, health, and human services needs.

Q & A:
Developmentally Appropriate Education

What is "developmentally appropriate education"?

- ☐ Developmentally appropriate education focuses on how children learn and is geared to the stages of children's development.
- ☐ Developmentally appropriate education does not result in the lowering of expectations; it adheres to high standards of academic and personal performance.
- ☐ There are four dimensions of developmentally appropriate education:
    - It is age appropriate – focusing on the ways children grow and develop.
    - It is individually appropriate – fostering individual students' interests and understanding.
    - It is culturally and linguistically appropriate – valuing the rich variety of languages and learning experiences children bring with them to the classroom.
    - It supports the social nature of learning – providing abundant opportunities for teacher and student interaction.

Isn't current educational practice "developmentally appropriate"?

Many formal teaching techniques used in early childhood and elementary classrooms are inappropriate for young children. For example:

- ☐ Children who are not deemed to be "ready" for kindergarten or first grade may be kept out of the grade, or placed in extra-year transitional programs.
- ☐ As many as 10 percent of Texas first graders are retained every year.
- ☐ Many schools "push" the elementary curriculum down to the early childhood and primary levels to prepare young children for tests they will face in later years.
- ☐ Large group teacher-directed activities dominate early grade classrooms in many districts.
- ☐ Schools are pressured to resort to rote drill and remediation methods that yield quick results on standardized tests.

Is there only one right way to implement developmentally appropriate programs?

- ☐ No! Developmentally appropriate education is not a rigid set of mandates that dictate practice but a philosophy for working with children.

☐ Because developmentally appropriate classrooms are not only age appropriate but also individually appropriate, they will not all look alike.

How are developmentally appropriate classrooms organized?

☐ Classroom organization is based on the following principles of learning.

- Predictable sequences of growth and change occur in all children; each child's growth and development varies within these sequences over time.
- All children come to school with some knowledge of the world around them.
- Children like to seek solutions to concrete problems.
- Children develop understanding about themselves, others, and their environment through active learning experiences, observation, and interaction with their peers, teachers, and other adults.
- All children can achieve state and local performance expectations.

☐ Developmentally appropriate classrooms can address these principles through the establishment of:

- heterogeneous, flexible instructional groups;
- learning centers;
- multiage grouping;
- thematic units within an interdisciplinary curriculum; and
- cooperative learning.

What is the role of the teacher?

☐ Teachers bring knowledge of teaching, child development, and how children learn into their classrooms.

☐ Teachers know that children build meaning by exploring and understanding their physical, social, and academic environments.

☐ Teachers combine instructional methods to engage children in active, enriched, and multifaceted learning environments.

☐ Teachers initiate learning activities, but also respond to children's initiatives.

Is developmentally appropriate curriculum watered down?

☐ No! Developmentally appropriate curriculum emphasizes active learning and in-depth understanding. It is focused on how young children learn and provides each child with rigorous, high-quality opportunities to acquire knowledge within specific subjects and across subject boundaries.

☐ Curriculum threads subject-specific and interdisciplinary knowledge into a fabric that supports continuous student progress toward rigorous standards and academic goals.

☐ **Children take an active role in the exploration of content areas. They participate in the design and delivery of the curriculum.**

☐ Children are immersed in educational experiences that build understanding rather than focus on coverage of isolated skills.

Do developmentally appropriate programs have rigorous academic expectations?

☐ Yes! Developmentally appropriate programs provide a solid academic foundation with high expectations for every child.

☐ All children move toward rigorous academic and personal goals within age- and individually appropriate classrooms.

☐ Learning environments are designed to support each child's interests and understanding and his or her development of critical thinking and problem solving skills.

Are developmentally appropriate programs suitable for only certain kinds of children?

☐ No! Developmentally appropriate programs address each child's individual needs, interests, language, culture, style, and pace of learning.

☐ They build upon student strengths rather than fit each child into rigid, pre-designed programs.

Is there retention or social promotion in these programs?

☐ No! Children are not retained in developmentally appropriate programs – research consistently shows that retention harms academic achievement and self-esteem.

☐ Developmentally appropriate programs focus on prevention – educators and families use a range of programs and services to prevent grade failure, including enhanced instruction, heterogeneous grouping, varying student-teacher ratios, and flexible school calendars to provide students opportunities to progress through the programs without falling behind their peers.

☐ School-wide planning, student support, and the implementation of a continuous progress curriculum create an atmosphere of high expectations and eliminate the need for social promotion.

What is "mastery" in developmentally appropriate early childhood and elementary programs?

☐ "Mastery" does not refer to the acquisition of isolated skills. It describes the entire process by which a student develops understanding of a concept, explores it through various activities, creates knowledge by connecting that understanding to other subject areas, and applies knowledge to solve problems.

☐ Developmentally appropriate curriculum focuses on the acquisition of knowledge over the long term. Essential skills are emphasized in the short term in order to facilitate understanding and problem solving. Mastery is not viewed in terms of individual lessons or daily learning activities, but as a standard of academic progress matched to stages of human development.

Why is reading important in the task force's vision of early childhood and elementary education?

☐ One in four Texas adults performs at the lowest literacy levels; the state ranks below the national average in adult literacy.

☐ Research shows that children who do not develop proficiency in reading in the primary grades are seriously at risk of school failure.

☐ Academic success depends upon being able to read, write, and communicate effectively. The three skills are essential components of literacy, a prerequisite to full participation in school and community. While development of the oral skills – speaking and listening – begin at birth and writing skills are honed over a number of years, reading requires focused development early in a child's formal education.

☐ An extensive body of research indicates that effective early literacy programs incorporate explicit and systematic instruction in phonemic awareness (the ability to detect sounds within spoken words) and knowledge of alphabetic principles (the ability to relate letters to the sounds they symbolize) within meaning-based, literature- and language-rich learning environments.

Is student assessment a part of developmentally appropriate programs?

☐ Ongoing student assessment helps individualize instruction and is an integral part of developmentally appropriate programs.

☐ Assessment results are used to inform educators and families of student progress and program effectiveness.

☐ Programs use multiple, performance-based measures and informal teacher and parent observations rather than a single test score to evaluate children's growth and development.

☐ Assessment monitors student progress on established performance standards.

What relationship do parents and families have with schools implementing developmentally appropriate programs?

☐ Parent and family involvement is more critical to a child's educational success during the early childhood and elementary years than at any other time; it is pivotal to the success of these programs.

☐ Developmentally appropriate programs actively involve and support parents as partners in the educational development and personal growth of children.

State Board of Education
Policy Statement on Early Childhood and Elementary Education

Mission The mission of early childhood and elementary education is to nurture the intellectual, emotional, social, and physical growth of all children. Our responsibility, as parents and educators, community members and citizens, is to create developmentally appropriate educational settings that prepare all children for success in school and active participation in the civic, economic, and cultural lives of their communities.

Philosophy Early childhood and elementary education in Texas encompasses the programs and settings that serve children from birth to entrance into middle school. During these important years, a child's intellectual, emotional, social, and physical growth is supported within the home, school, and community. Children learn and develop differently. Families, educators, and community members support these differences with education and early care settings that provide each child with the time, opportunities, and resources needed to achieve the goals of early childhood and elementary education. We expect nothing less than every child's attainment of a firm foundation in reading and mastery of a developmentally appropriate early childhood and elementary curriculum. We are committed to changing our systems and settings of education, early care, and community support to ensure that each child achieves these goals.

Developmentally appropriate early childhood and elementary education focuses on the principles and stages of child development, fosters individual interests and understanding, recognizes the social nature of learning, and values cultural and linguistic diversity. Effective early childhood and elementary programs expand opportunities for learning – enriching the curriculum, enhancing instruction, and extending learning time to accommodate each child's culture, language, learning style, and pace. Early childhood and elementary education programs help create caring communities that demonstrate, through school climate, curriculum, and instruction, respect for others, commitment to shared values, and emphasis on the importance of enhancing the self-worth of each child. The most effective programs establish strong connections between the family and the school.

Developmentally appropriate early childhood and elementary education is based on the principle that children construct knowledge from active experience with their physical and social environments. Early childhood programs engage each child in a multidimensional learning environment that combines instruction and play to create a foundation for future academic and personal success. Elementary education builds upon that foundation to connect children's growing sense of independence and increased cognitive abilities to learning opportunities that encourage critical thinking, problem solving, exploration, and creativity.

Organization

Effective early childhood and elementary education programs are organized around the children they serve. Early childhood education serves children in early care settings, prekindergarten, and the primary grade levels. Elementary education extends from primary to entrance into middle school. Early childhood and elementary educators implement instructional practices, organizational arrangements, and staffing patterns to prevent early school failure and assure that no student is retained. Each child's intellectual, emotional, social, and physical growth is supported with curriculum, instruction, and classroom organization that is geared to stages of child development rather than specific grade levels. Within age- and individually appropriate instructional settings, educators cultivate each student's understanding of the curriculum and support each child's progress toward educational goals.

Curriculum

All children come to school equipped with knowledge and skills learned from their families and communities. The curriculum in developmentally appropriate early childhood and elementary programs builds on this learning to provide each child with an array of opportunities for acquiring subject area understanding and enabling creative thought and expression. Reading is the fundamental skill that supports each child's attainment of educational goals. The ability to understand and use written language and communicate effectively is critical to each child's understanding of the curriculum and thoughtful engagement in the world outside school.

Developmentally appropriate curriculum enables continuous learning and intellectual, emotional, social, and physical growth. Students achieve understanding through interdisciplinary instruction and thematic activities. The curriculum builds upon children's interests, experiences, and community resources to connect each student's acquisition of essential skills and knowledge to the goals of early childhood and elementary education.

Instruction

Early childhood and elementary instruction is child-centered, multifaceted, and systematic. Classroom activities challenge student understanding and are strengthened by student diversity. Instruction addresses the cultures, languages, and learning styles of all students. Depth of understanding, rather than subject coverage, guides the interactions between students and teachers. Children progress through the curriculum with continuous opportunities for academic enrichment, acceleration, and support.

Teachers facilitate understanding through a variety of settings, techniques, and heterogeneous grouping strategies. They encourage each child's achievement of education goals through student-directed learning. In developmentally appropriate programs, students are flexibly grouped to promote individual understanding, not tracked on the basis of perceived ability. Students may be organized in mixed-age learning groups based on developmental stages rather than discrete grade levels.

Assessment

Developmentally appropriate assessment measures understanding while encouraging thinking. It is performance-based and meaningful. Assessment is closely linked with curriculum and instruction. It is not used to exclude children from education programs and opportunities. Individual, cultural, and linguistic diversity is supported in the assessment process. Student achievement is reflected through a variety of measures and ongoing activities. Early childhood and elementary assessment charts student progress and program improvement across a wide range of skills and knowledge.

The primary purpose of assessment is to inform educators, students, and families about the progress students are making toward early childhood and elementary education goals. Developmentally appropriate assessment provides educators information they need to tailor classroom practice around individual student strengths and needs. It facilitates the partnership between educators and families by focusing on the academic and personal growth of students.

Assessment also provides indicators of program accountability. Developmentally appropriate assessment communicates progress toward state accountability standards through an evaluation of all early childhood and elementary program components – multiple measures of student performance, levels of teacher preparation, and indicators of parent involvement. Program evaluation in these settings is based upon samples of student performance rather than universally-administered, norm-referenced tests.

Professional Staffing and Development

Educators working with young children are prepared to make the mission and philosophy of early childhood and elementary education in Texas a reality. Early childhood and elementary educators are able to address the age-appropriate developmental stages of children through the completion of a preparation program that includes a strong foundation in the liberal arts and a study of pedagogy that is integrated with a knowledge of child development. They are fully remunerated for their training, credentials, and experience. Opportunities for professional development abound in all ongoing and planned activities of teachers, administrators, counselors, and support staff. Professional development is campus-based and focused on student learning.

Early childhood and elementary educators actively participate in decisions that affect the performance of their students, campuses, and districts. They are supported through pupil-staff ratios that are predicated upon the needs of children and developmentally appropriate instructional practices. Educators in early childhood and elementary programs actively participate in the development of curriculum and instructional materials to assure that each child achieves the goals of early childhood and elementary education.

Family and Community Collaboration

A child's optimal learning and personal growth depend upon security and guidance within the family; good health and nutrition; and high levels of collaboration between home, school, and community. Parent and family involvement in education is essential to the intellectual growth and academic achievement of their children. It is also critical to the success of early childhood and elementary education programs. Educators develop successful programs by responding to the changing needs of the communities they serve. They provide leadership to their communities by enabling parent and family involvement in education. Educators in developmentally appropriate programs work with parents and families to establish partnerships that support children's learning and strengthen the performance of their schools.

Educators and early care administrators and providers work together to provide a seamless transition between the private, state, and federal systems of early childhood care and education and elementary school programs. They coordinate resources to address the needs of young children and their families with developmentally appropriate programs and seek to integrate, to the greatest extent possible, early childhood care and education programs, staff, and program sites. Articulation between early childhood programs and services accommodates cultural and linguistic diversity.

The focus on child development that is central to the mission and philosophy of early childhood and elementary education in Texas is inextricably linked to the health and well-being of the children and families. At the state level, educators, service providers, and policy makers work together to support the academic and personal growth of children and the health and well-being of their families. In communities, schools serving early childhood- and elementary-aged children are part of a network that involves health and human service agencies, child care providers, parent education organizations, cultural institutions, and local businesses working together to achieve the goals of early childhood and elementary education.

Recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING A DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PHILOSOPHY

For the Legislature:

1) Review, amend, and, as necessary, adopt legislation that provides all children with access to learning environments that are age-, individually-, culturally-, and linguistically-appropriate.

2) Extend the instructional calendar to assist educators in preventing school failure.

3) Provide state funds for full-day kindergarten.

For the State Board of Education:

1) Establish curriculum and expectations for education that engage students in learning and that support continuous progress of all students toward rigorous educational standards.

2) Develop systems that attract and retain trained and credentialed bilingual and early childhood educators.

For the Texas Education Agency:

1) Use the *Policy Statement on Early Childhood and Elementary Education* as a benchmark when identifying best practices and developing instructional frameworks, guidelines, and school-based initiatives in early childhood and elementary education.

For Regional Service Centers:

1) Use the *Policy Statement on Early Childhood and Elementary Education* to develop and implement technical assistance and professional development activities that support child-centered early childhood and elementary education programs.

For Districts and Campuses:

1) Implement the policy recommendations of the Task Force on Early Childhood and Elementary Education.

2) Establish and maintain high expectations for each child.

3) Fund and staff prekindergarten programs at a level that provides for full enrollment of all eligible three- and four-year-old children.

4) Provide safe, stimulating early childhood and elementary learning environments that promote the intellectual, emotional, social, and physical growth of all children.

For Communities:

1) Support the intellectual, emotional, social, and physical growth of all children. Recognize the crucial importance of family and neighborhood involvement in each child's education, optimal growth, and development.

2) Prepare each child for academic, personal, and social success. Support each child's academic, personal, and social growth.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STAFFING

For the Legislature:

1) Extend the 22-1 student-teacher ratio through grade five.

2) Increase the funding weight for students in prekindergarten through grade 3. Fund the increased weight through ADA allotments from the Foundation School Program. Use the increased funding to lower the 22-1 student-adult ratio in early childhood and primary programs to 22-2. One of the adults counted in this ratio must be a certified teacher.

For School Districts and Campuses:

3) Provide training to adults working with certified teachers within early childhood and elementary classrooms affected by the 22-2 ratio. Base that training on the competencies included in the Child Development Associate credential.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CURRICULUM

For the State Board of Education:

1) Amend rules to group prekindergarten through grade three essential elements under developmental domains rather than subject area headings.

2) Amend rules to restructure the early childhood and elementary essential elements to support continuous progress of students toward academic goals as specified in §21.1011 of the *Texas Education Code*, based on acquired skills, depth of understanding across subject areas, and demonstrated mastery.

3) Adopt early childhood and elementary learning systems and textbooks that encourage interdisciplinary and thematic instruction and ease campus implementation of mixed-age classrooms.

4) Adopt early childhood and elementary learning systems and textbooks that are culturally and linguistically diverse.

For the Texas Education Agency:

1) Develop frameworks for early childhood and elementary education that tie balanced, developmentally appropriate curriculum to current research on child development and developmentally appropriate classroom practices. Include in the frameworks support for continuous student progress and growth through subject-specific skills and interdisciplinary units and projects. Give priority to the development of frameworks at the prekindergarten and primary grades. Develop frameworks for a primary reading curriculum that integrates phonemic awareness and understanding of alphabetic principles within meaning-based literature- and language-rich learning environments.

2) Develop curriculum frameworks that value cultural and linguistic diversity.

3) Develop guidelines that ensure that all students, including those in categorical and specially-funded programs, have access to developmentally appropriate curriculum.

4) Provide flexibility in the district use of textbook funds to enable districts to support the purchase of experiential materials for early childhood programs.

For Regional Education Service Centers:

1) Provide technical assistance to schools and districts seeking to implement developmentally appropriate curriculum.

For School Districts:

1) Develop early childhood and elementary curriculum that is based on current research on learning and child development and geared to the goals of early childhood and elementary education. Organize the curriculum so that it focuses on student acquisition of subject and interdisciplinary knowledge. Structure it so that children can suggest curriculum content and the way it is implemented in the classroom.

2) Do not use past academic performance or prior demonstrations of ability to determine access to the curriculum. Develop curriculum that challenges all students and supports their continuous academic progress and acquisition of knowledge.

3) Ensure that all students, including special student populations and those served by categorically-funded programs, have access to developmentally appropriate, interdisciplinary curriculum.

4) Establish a district reading curriculum that is tied to long-term educational goals and ensures that all students will attain high levels of achievement through success, confidence, and a firm foundation in reading. Structure the reading curriculum so that it supports complex interactions between reader and text in ways that are age- and individually appropriate. Provide explicit and systematic integration of phonemic awareness training and knowledge of alphabetic principles within literature- and language-rich learning environments.

For Campuses:

1) Develop and implement, through the campus planning process, curriculum that addresses community needs and goals and supports continuous student progress through the acquisition of subject-specific and interdisciplinary knowledge. Ensure that the curriculum encourages children to take an active role in the exploration of content and interdisciplinary learning.

2) Enable teachers, administrators, and support staff to participate in the development of curriculum goals, sequences, and materials.

3) Do not use past academic performance or prior demonstrations of ability to determine access to the curriculum. Develop curriculum that challenges all students and supports their continuous academic progress and acquisition of knowledge in all content areas.

4) Ensure that all students, including special student populations and those served by categorically-funded programs, have access to developmentally

appropriate, interdisciplinary curriculum.

5) Assure student achievement and success with a curriculum that provides every child with a firm foundation in reading. Focus the reading curriculum on long-term educational goals. Structure reading instruction so that it supports complex interactions between reader and text in ways that are age- and individually appropriate. Build the reading curriculum upon pervasive opportunities to use and understand oral and written language in a variety of formats and situations; systematically impart phonemic awareness training and knowledge of alphabetic principles; connect reading instruction to literature- and language-rich learning environments in meaningful ways for all students.

6) Increase the quality and quantity of culturally and linguistically diverse materials in classrooms.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INSTRUCTION

For the Legislature:

1) Repeal restrictive statutes relating to services to special student populations and services that directly or indirectly contribute to tracking students based on perceptions of readiness or measures of prior achievement.

For the State Board of Education:

1) Amend rules to encourage school districts to implement developmentally appropriate practices, including the creation of mixed-age education programs and heterogeneous learning environments that meet the needs of special student populations within the educational mainstream.

For the Texas Education Agency:

1) Create frameworks that provide guidance to districts implementing developmentally appropriate instructional practices, including reading, in early childhood and elementary education.

2) Disseminate effective, developmentally appropriate early childhood and elementary learning practices.

3) Conduct evaluations of the academic and social performance of early childhood and elementary students in schools that have implemented developmentally appropriate practices.

For School Districts:

1) Implement developmentally appropriate practices to assure continuous high achievement for all early childhood and elementary students.

2) Critically examine the use of worksheets and other passive learning materials in the early grades. Implement developmentally appropriate instruction through materials, media, and technologies that support active learning and are geared to children's stages of development.

3) Develop a philosophy and implement a policy that articulates the purpose of bilingual education and second language acquisition in the district. Delineate the goals of these programs and their relationship to other district educational programs and practices.

4) Increase the use, especially in prekindergarten and primary programs, of student's primary language as the language of instruction.

5) Provide indoor and outdoor facilities that support hands-on active learning experiences, and that are concrete, real, and relevant to the lives of young children.

For Campuses:

1) Implement instructional practices that are grounded in current research in child development.

2) Critically examine the use of worksheets and other passive learning materials in the early grades. Implement developmentally appropriate instruction through materials, media, and technologies that support active learning and are geared to children's stages of development.

3) Focus instruction on preventing school failure, rather than remediating failed students. Provide all students with opportunities to explore the curriculum in depth, supporting each child's pursuit of high achievement and personal growth through accelerated instruction and enrichment of all learning activities on a continuous basis.

4) Establish child-centered multisensory learning environments in which instruction responds to student interest; promotes student participation in the curriculum; provides a rich context for a variety of social interaction between students, teachers, and other adults, and forges connections to the community served by the school.

5) Promote individual understanding through flexible and heterogeneous grouping of students. Organize learning groups across ages and abilities. Focus on promoting academic and personal growth rather than demonstrations of perceived ability or prior achievement. Allow for a variety of grouping techniques and instructional strategies. Structure the groups to encourage high levels of achievement and allow special student populations broad access to the educational mainstream.

6) Value student diversity. Use a student's home language, particularly in early childhood programs, as the primary language of instruction. Provide opportunities for linguistically diverse children in early childhood programs to engage in both teacher-to-student and student-to-student talk. Assure that student materials employed and produced in a classroom reflect the cultures and languages of the students.

7) In early childhood and primary programs create learning environments that encourage learning through well-defined activity centers and support the acquisition of social and academic skills through both child-initiated and teacher-structured play.

8) Extend opportunities for learning and foster after-class involvement with the curriculum above kindergarten through homework assignments that promote understanding and problem solving by engaging students in a variety of individual and group-oriented tasks.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO ELIMINATE RETENTION

For the Legislature:

1) Fund a student-adult ratio of 22-2 in early childhood and primary programs. Fund a student-teacher ratio of 22-1 in programs serving children in grade 5.

For the State Board of Education:

1) Amend rules to prohibit retention of students in early childhood through middle grade programs.

For the Texas Education Agency:

1) Develop guidelines for districts that lead to the elimination of retention while ensuring high achievement for all students. Disseminate practices that have proven effective in eliminating retention, such as lower student-adult ratios, accelerated instruction, heterogeneous mixed-age grouping, and flexible, extended learning time. Indicate, through guidelines and the dissemination of effective practices, that eliminating retention depends upon a coordinated, holistic approach to each student's education.

2) Evaluate the results of pilot programs to eliminate retention, cited in *Texas Education Code* §21.562 (State-Funded Optional Extended Year Program). Compare the results of these programs to the programs to eliminate retention cited in *Texas Education Code* §21.563 (Optional Extended Year Program).

For Regional Education Service Centers:

1) Provide training in practices that have proven effective in eliminating retention.

2) Collaborate with early childhood and elementary school network mentor schools that have been recognized for their implementation of programs that have eliminated retention.

For School Districts:

1) Eliminate retention through approaches to instruction that ensure high achievement for all students. Employ curriculum, instructional practices, organizational and staffing arrangements, and school calendars that overcome the need to retain students in grade.

2) Include policies and programs to eliminate retention in district improvement plans.

For Campuses:

1) Eliminate retention through approaches to instruction that ensure high achievement for all students. Include policies and programs to eliminate retention in campus improvement plans.

2) Train administrators, teachers, and support staff in methods and programs that are effective in eliminating retention.

3) Develop plans to meet the social and academic needs of children in danger of being retained, drawing upon a network of teacher, administrator, counselor, and community support.

4) Educate campus faculties, parents and families, and community members on the negative effects of retention on future academic performance, student

self-esteem, and likelihood of dropping out of school.

5) Collaborate with early childhood and elementary school network mentor schools that have effectively implemented programs that eliminate retention.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ASSESSMENT

For the Federal Government:

1) Eliminate regulations that reallocate Chapter 1 funds away from schools that show improved test scores and base program eligibility for services on economic criteria rather than test scores.

2) Reduce the stakes associated with norm-referenced achievement testing of young children by prohibiting the use of such tests to evaluate federally funded programs below grade 3.

3) Allow states and school districts to evaluate federally funded programs through sampling methods and performance-based assessments that match locally-defined objectives of programs.

For the Legislature:

1) Amend *Texas Education Code* §21.557 (f)(2)(a) so that the determination of whether a student is at-risk of dropping out of school in grades prekindergarten through 6 does not depend upon the student's performance on a single readiness test or assessment instrument given at the beginning of the school year, but draws upon multiple and authentic assessment measures.

2) Amend *Texas Education Code* §35.026 (Local Option) to state that any criterion- or norm-referenced assessment adopted and administered by a school district in addition to the state assessment program shall reflect nationally-recognized standards of developmentally appropriate educational practice.

For the State Board of Education:

1) Encourage the use of local early childhood and elementary accountability systems that include authentic measures of student performance and provide indicators of the learning environment, teacher preparation, and parent involvement.

2) Amend rules to allow sampling methods to be used as alternatives to every-student testing for purposes of program evaluation, accountability, and comparison to national norms.

3) Develop rules to encourage developmentally appropriate reporting practices, such as alternatives to number and letter grades and nine-week grading periods, in the primary grades.

4) Develop rules requiring publishers of standardized and/or norm-referenced tests used by school districts to provide information on test validity, reliability, and disaggregated norms for subpopulations to the state and school districts.

For the Texas Education Agency:

1) Define a set of performance standards for early childhood and elementary education programs which are based on education goals and tied to devel-

opmentally appropriate curriculum and instruction.

2) Develop guidelines for a system of performance assessments that measure student progress toward the performance standards, combining long-term projects, narrative evaluations, portfolios, and onetime assessments of performance.

For School Districts:

1) Refrain from the inappropriate use of standardized tests for young children; evaluate each instrument on the basis of its validity and reliability and use it only for the purpose for which it was designed.

2) Adopt assessment strategies that value cultural and linguistic diversity and are congruent with the curriculum and instructional practices of the program.

3) Develop assessment guidelines for enrollment, readiness, and placement of children in early childhood programs that use multiple, authentic measures, and informal observations by teachers and parents, rather than a single test score.

4) Employ alternatives to norm-referenced achievement tests for identification and program evaluation, as state and federal regulations permit.

5) Incorporate tasks, such as design, selection, and evaluation of assessment instruments, into professional development activities of educators.

For Campuses:

1) Refrain from the use of letter grades during early childhood and elementary years; assess children's progress toward established performance standards through teacher observation narratives, checklists, and portfolios containing samples of children's work; develop a structured method of communicating children's progress to parents.

2) Conduct conferences with parents and children to communicate their children's progress and to solicit their expertise in making decisions regarding placement and referral.

For Parents:

1) Participate in teacher-student-parent conferences on the educational progress, performance, and assessment of your child.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STAFF PREPARATION

For the Legislature:

1) Raise the average Texas teacher salary until it meets the projected national average salary in the 1997-98 school year.

2) Support efforts to develop a comprehensive professional development system for the state's early care providers and educators.

For the State Board of Education:

1) Amend certification rules to establish teacher certificates that combine knowledge of child development, pedagogy, and content area expertise, including reading. Assure that teachers in early childhood and primary programs possess specialized knowledge of developmentally appropriate approaches to the education of young chil-

dren, through certification for new teachers and endorsement for veteran teachers.

2) Amend rules to develop an early childhood administrator's endorsement covering prekindergarten through primary grade-level programs.

3) Develop rules for an alternative track to an early childhood education certificate that awards credit for significant work experience within accredited early care and education programs.

4) Adopt state results measures for the preparation and certification of teachers and administrators in early childhood and elementary programs.

For the Texas Education Agency:

1) Develop an accountability system that assures that results-based standards for teacher education programs are consistent across the state's teacher education providers.

2) Develop a comprehensive, coordinated professional development system for early care and education practitioners in Texas.

3) Develop guidelines related to a system of professional preparation and certificate for teachers working in accredited early care and education settings.

4) Evaluate the effectiveness of the state's professional development system.

For Teacher Education Providers:

Higher Education Coordinating Board:

1) Develop rules for the articulation of academic credit between the requirements of two-year programs leading to an associate degree in child care and development and four-year or other training programs leading to a baccalaureate degree.

2) Develop rules within the early childhood endorsement that award credit, in either institutions of higher education or alternative teacher certification programs, for work experience within accredited child care and education programs.

Institutions of Higher Education:

1) Construct deeper connections between teacher education programs and practical learning in schools. Establish mechanisms that promote these connections by allowing higher education faculty to meet some promotion and tenure requirements through activities involving teachers and students in an elementary school.

2) Recruit greater numbers of minority and dual language individuals for careers in early childhood and elementary education.

3) Develop degree plans for the early childhood endorsement that award credit for work experience within accredited child care and education programs. Evaluate the progress made by institutions in awarding credit for work experience.

4) Provide students in teacher preparation programs with instruction in teaching reading that provides structured, systematic, and multisensory approaches to phonemic and alphabetic awareness within a language- and literature-rich learning environment.

Alternative Teacher Certification Programs:

1) Recruit greater numbers of minority and dual language individuals for ca-

reers in early childhood and elementary education.

2) Award credit for work experience within accredited child care and education programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ONGOING TRAINING AND SUPPORT

For the Legislature:

1) Extend teacher contracts to increase professional planning and development time by five days each year to 20 days in the 1999 school year, while maintaining 180 instructional days.

2) Compensate staff for professional development days at no less than the average daily salary rate for Texas teachers.

For the Texas Education Agency:

1) Develop a comprehensive plan for improving early childhood and elementary student performance in Texas. Include a trainer-of-trainers model for supporting professional development in this plan. Focus professional development provided through this model on the *Policy Statement on Early Childhood and Elementary Education* and recommendations for implementing the policy. Coordinate the implementation of this plan with Regional Education Service Centers and the early childhood and elementary school network.

2) Provide funding to support the establishment and operation of a statewide early childhood and elementary school mentor network. The purpose of the network is to provide intensive, ongoing school-to-school professional development. Coordinate activities of the early childhood and elementary school network with other statewide professional development and school improvement initiatives.

3) Establish and coordinate professional development institutes that address developmentally appropriate instructional materials and technologies in various curricular areas.

4) Develop a range of professional development activities for instructional assistants working in the areas of early childhood and primary education.

For Regional Education Service Centers:

1) Promote and support the early childhood and elementary school mentor network.

2) Designate and train Education Service Center personnel to specialize in early childhood and elementary education and developmentally appropriate strategies for classroom practice.

3) Collaborate with districts to identify barriers to early childhood and elementary student achievement; provide training that focuses on professional growth.

For School Districts:

1) Provide teachers and administrators with time to strengthen their knowledge of child development and developmentally appropriate early childhood and elementary education practices.

Encourage intercampus collaboration among early childhood and elementary teachers and administrators.

2) Facilitate participation of administrators, teachers, and support staff in school/university partnerships.

3) Provide funding for professional development, in an amount equal to at least four percent of the salaries and wages of district personnel.

4) Structure district personnel assignments to assure that: 1) teachers at the highest level of training and qualification are available to each early childhood and elementary campus; and 2) each campus has the ability to provide teachers regularly scheduled blocks of time, outside of the personal planning period, for preparation, cross-campus planning, and collaboration.

5) Develop teacher and administrator appraisal instruments that accommodate and support developmentally appropriate early childhood and elementary education techniques and strategies.

6) Develop joint professional development opportunities for teachers and other staff across different early childhood programs.

7) Provide training to teachers and instructional assistants to support developmentally appropriate dual language education.

For Campuses:

1) Provide funding for professional development, in an amount equal to at least four percent of the salaries and wages of campus personnel. Use a campus-based needs assessment, conducted in conjunction with the campus site based decision-making committee, to identify professional development opportunities supported by these funds.

2) Participate in the state early childhood and elementary school mentor network.

3) Identify lead teachers to participate in statewide professional development institutes.

4) Assure that teachers have regularly scheduled blocks of time for preparation, collaboration and professional development. This time is in addition to, rather than in lieu of, required individual planning periods.

5) Based on a campus-based needs assessment, provide educators with ongoing professional development in assuring that every student will achieve success, confidence, and a firm foundation in reading. Include in this professional development strand the teaching of reading through systematic, and multisensory approaches that integrate phonemic awareness training and alphabetic knowledge with learning environments that are rich in language, literature, and meaning.

6) Provide opportunities for coordination and planning between early childhood and elementary educators and bilingual educators.

7) Provide opportunities for coordination, planning, and training between early childhood and elementary educators and educators in Head Start and other early childhood programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARENT AND FAMILY PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION

For the State Board of Education:

1) Adopt a state policy statement on parent involvement in education.

For the Texas Education Agency:

1) Implement a state parent involvement initiative to support parenting skills of mothers and fathers and enhance their participation in the education of their children.

For Regional Education Service Centers:

1) Provide technical assistance to school districts seeking to implement more extensive parent involvement and education programs.

2) Organize annual parent-school-community conferences which highlight effective strategies and innovations in improving parent and family involvement in education.

For School Districts:

1) Fund "family advocate" positions to serve each school or vertical team of schools in the district.

2) Provide translation services for school materials and meetings for non-English speaking parents and families.

3) Implement programs to familiarize parents with learning activities and strategies to reinforce learning at home.

4) Implement parent education programs for parents of children from birth through age three.

5) Work with community media outlets, such as local cable television franchises, to provide greater access to parent education materials.

For Campuses:

1) Communicate, both orally and in writing, with parents in their primary language.

2) Offer opportunities for educators and parents to collectively develop strategies, activities, and resources to support linguistic and cultural diversity in schools.

3) Exchange information with parents about the educational program on each campus and the progress that their children are making toward educational goals.

4) Work with community education, health, and human service teams to conduct regular home visits and meetings with parents and families served on campus.

5) Schedule at least one parent conference each semester.

For Parents:

1) Recognize that the ultimate form of parent involvement in education is personal involvement in the education of children.

2) Provide early childhood and elementary children with language-rich home environments: speak frequently to your children, listen carefully to their responses, answer questions, and either read to them or have them read to you every day.

For Employers:

1) Provide parents of early childhood and elementary-aged children with at least two parenting days per year, with pay, to enable parents to visit their children's classroom, consult with teachers, and assist in classroom activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COORDINATING EARLY CARE PROGRAMS WITH PUBLIC EDUCATION

For the Federal Government:

1) Expand funding for the Head Start program so that, by 1997, all eligible three- and four-year-old children are served.

2) Expand eligibility for the Head Start program so that families in transition into the work force can remain eligible for Head Start services as their incomes rise above the poverty level.

3) Authorize states to establish uniform developmentally appropriate standards of program quality and student performance for all early childhood education programs, including Head Start.

For the Legislature:

1) Fund full-day kindergarten programs.

2) Expand funding for state-funded early care and education so that all eligible families can have access to these services.

For the State Board of Education:

1) Develop facilities standards for district prekindergarten programs.

For the Texas Education Agency:

1) Work with the Texas Department of Human Services and the Governor's Head Start Collaboration Project to implement specific strategies pursuant to §16.003 of the *Texas Education Code*, to provide technical assistance and enhance local collaboration between Head Start, prekindergarten, and child care programs.

2) Work to align eligibility requirements for early care and education programs and services. Participate in interagency letters of agreement among agencies involved with serving children in early childhood and elementary education programs.

3) Assist school districts in collaborative efforts with community-based early care and education providers.

For Regional Education Service Centers:

1) Establish regional collaborative networks of school district and community-based early care and education providers.

For School Districts:

1) Work with representatives of social agencies, spiritual institutions, businesses, and other community institutions to help parents and families gain access to high quality school readiness activities and programs. Establish, with early care and education providers, a community network to coordinate program resources and facilities; communicate expectations of early care and education program outcomes.

2) Coordinate before- and after-school care arrangements, using district re-

sources and community care providers, to better serve young children and families.

3) Provide early care and education services for children of parents receiving education services offered by the district, such as teenaged parents and parents enrolled in programs such as Even Start.

4) Establish prekindergarten programs that increase the use of Limited English Proficient prekindergarten students' primary languages.

5) Expand the eligibility for prekindergarten enrollment to include children of parents willing to pay tuition for these services.

For Campuses:

1) Communicate with early care and education providers to gain a more complete picture of the children entering public school, facilitate their transition to campus-based early childhood programs, and provide teachers and counselors with greater documentation about the developmental stages of the children they will serve.

2) Invite community early care and education providers to participate on the site-based decision making teams.

For Communities:

1) Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment that focuses on the ability of community institutions, including the school system, to meet the early care and education needs of children and families.

For Libraries:

1) Develop books and other media that promote school readiness among families and children involved with early childhood and elementary education.

For Community Early Care and Education Providers:

1) Provide early care and education settings that are developmentally appropriate and educationally sound.

2) Measure the quality of programs by assessing their developmental appropriateness; assess program outcomes using multiple procedures that are consistent with the principles of developmentally appropriate education. Communicate the results to families served by the programs.

3) Share information with early childhood and elementary teachers, administrators, and support staff.

4) Pursue resource sharing arrangements and partnerships with school district early childhood and elementary programs.

For Families:

1) Organize and participate in early care and education parent-teacher organizations to increase support for children in these programs and their families.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ESTABLISHING SCHOOL-FAMILY-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

For the Federal Government:

1) Provide regulatory and financial incentives for education, health, and human service providers to establish collaborative programs.

2) Decategorize funding to increase cohesion and comprehensiveness of education, health, and human services to eligible children and families.

For the Legislature:

1) Establish a fund to provide coordinated health and human services to eligible students and families.

2) Implement the Texas Children's Health Plan, developed by the Texas Health Policy Task Force, to establish a statewide system for financing and ensuring access to high quality, comprehensive health care for all children, from birth through age 18 and for all pregnant women.

3) Develop a state-level interagency group to provide technical assistance with the establishment of school-linked health service programs. Such a group could link systems to funding sources, assist in developing programs, and document program outcomes.

4) Appropriate funds to the Texas Department of Health for start-up and technical assistance to schools seeking to start health services programs.

5) Increase the flexibility of health and human services eligibility requirements so that children and families who qualify for one program can access services from several agencies.

6) Increase funding for child care services targeting collaborative services with school district prekindergarten and teen parent education programs.

For the State Board of Education:

1) Develop a strategy for encouraging school-family-community partnerships, drawing upon a wide range of resources and facilities to assure excellence and equity for all students.

For the Texas Education Agency:

1) Work with other state agencies to develop guidelines for evaluating the effectiveness of school-linked health and community services.

2) Develop strategies, in cooperation with school districts and health and human service agencies, for procuring and distributing available noneducational federal funds to support and expand services to early childhood and elementary students and their families.

For State Agencies:

1) Coordinate services and resources to best respond to community needs in Texas.

2) Coordinate management information systems to share information and develop the social services data bank into a true case management system that is based on prevention, rather than crisis intervention.

For the Texas Department of Health:

1) Provide technical assistance and support to schools seeking to start up health services programs.

For Regional Education Service Centers:

1) Work with county and regional entities to plan and develop effective community service delivery systems that complement campus and district services.

For School Districts:

1) Initiate and collaborate with efforts to alter funding mechanisms and program eligibility standards to create incentives

for local programs to collaborate in providing services.

2) Adopt policies that facilitate coordination of education, health, and community services through a focus on child development, family preservation, and community renewal.

3) Coordinate resources and facilities with community health and social agencies to meet the needs of coordinated education, health, and community services.

4) Fund and implement the Comprehensive School Guidance Program on each campus serving early childhood and elementary students; support campus counselors with administrative assistance in order to allow them to more effectively implement the Comprehensive School Guidance Program.

5) Provide resources for professional development on establishing community health and human services networks.

6) Evaluate the effectiveness of school-linked coordinated services.

7) Provide facilities and funding for school-based after-school care programs.

For Campuses:

1) Conduct a needs assessment to determine the extent of student and family needs for coordinated school-linked health services programs.

2) Based on the needs assessment, conduct professional development, through the campus planning and improvement process, on coordinating community health and human services with education.

3) Establish teams to oversee coordination of education, community, and health services; respond to children and families in need of services; and reflect on current standards of service delivery in education, health, and human services.

4) Based on the needs assessment, provide school-based child care programs, either through the district or through private vendors, that follow the quality standards for after-school care established by the National Association of Elementary School Principals, including child-adult ratios of 10-1 for children under six and 12-1 for those over six and allowing children to choose from a range of high interest activities.

For Communities:

1) Conduct a comprehensive assessment of how well community education, health, and human services institutions are meeting the needs of children and families. Use the results of the assessment to initiate a coordinated approach to education, health, and human services planning.

For Health and Social Service Agencies and Community Institutions:

1) Work with school districts and campuses to provide comprehensive support, including health, family support, and developmentally appropriate child care and education services to children and families.

2) Work with school districts and campuses to implement preventive health and wellness programs.

Task Force on Early Childhood and Elementary Education

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COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

TITLE VI, CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964; THE MODIFIED COURT ORDER, CIVIL ACTION 5281, FEDERAL DISTRICT COURT, EASTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS, TYLER DIVISION

Reviews of local education agencies pertaining to compliance with Title VI Civil Rights Act of 1964 and with specific requirements of the Modified Court Order Civil Action No. 5281, Federal District Court, Eastern District of Texas, Tyler Division are conducted periodically by staff representatives of the Texas Education Agency. These reviews cover at least the following policies and practices:

(1) acceptance policies on student transfers from other school districts;

(2) operation of school bus routes or runs on a nonsegregated basis;

(3) nondiscrimination in extracurricular activities and the use of school facilities;

(4) nondiscriminatory practices in the hiring, assigning, promoting, paying, demoting, reassigning, or dismissing of faculty and staff members who work with children;

(5) enrollment and assignment of students without discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin;

(6) nondiscriminatory practices relating to the use of a student's first language; and

(7) evidence of published procedures for hearing complaints and grievances.

In addition to conducting reviews, the Texas Education Agency staff representatives check complaints of discrimination made by a citizen or citizens residing in a school district where it is alleged discriminatory practices have occurred or are occurring.

Where a violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act is found, the findings are reported to the Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education.

If there is a direct violation of the Court Order in Civil Action No. 5281 that cannot be cleared through negotiation, the sanctions required by the Court Order are applied.

TITLE VII, CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964 AS AMENDED BY THE EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY ACT OF 1972; EXECUTIVE ORDERS 11246 AND 11375; EQUAL PAY ACT OF 1964; TITLE IX, EDUCATION AMENDMENTS; REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 AS AMENDED; 1974 AMENDMENTS TO THE WAGE-HOUR LAW EXPANDING THE AGE DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT ACT OF 1967; VIETNAM ERA VETERANS READJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE ACT OF 1972 AS AMENDED; IMMIGRATION REFORM AND CONTROL ACT OF 1986; AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT OF 1990; AND THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1991.

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Sintesis Ejecutiva

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Reporte de La Mesa Directiva
Para la Educacion Pre-primaria y Primaria

La Agencia de Educacion del Estado de Texas
Austin, Texas

Enero 1994

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Usted puede encontrar la discusión de la información que ha encontrado en esta síntesis ejecutiva con lujo de detalle en el reporte: *First Impressions / Primeras Impresiones: Report of the Task Force on Early Childhood and Elementary Education.* Texas Education Agency Publication GE4 170 04, January 1994.

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First Impressions / Primeras Impresiones: Reporte de la
Mesa Directiva Para la Educación
Pre-primaria y Primaria

está dedicado a la memoria de

DR. EMMETT J. CONRAD

Miembro de la Mesa Directiva de Educación
del Estado de Texas, Distrito No. 13
Octubre 1984 - Abril 1993

Reporte de La Mesa Directiva
Para la Educación Pre-primaria y Primaria

Síntesis Ejecutiva

La Mesa Directiva Para la Educación Pre-primaria y Primaria (Mesa Directiva) fue creada por la Mesa Directiva Educativa del Estado de Texas en Enero de 1993. La Mesa Directiva Educativa del Estado de Texas comisionó a ésta a (1) examinar la condición de la niñez del Estado de Texas desde el nacimiento hasta el ingreso a la escuela secundaria, (2) desarrollar una estrategia política que garantice la alta calidad de un sistema integral educativo desde la infancia hasta la escuela primaria, y (3) formular recomendaciones para implementar esta meta política.

La mesa directiva define los programas de pre-primaria como aquellos que proveen servicios para la infancia, en guarderías, el prekindergarten, hasta los primeros tres grados de la escuela primaria, es decir, desde el nacimiento hasta los 8 años de edad. La educación primaria se extiende desde el ingreso a la primaria hasta el ingreso a la secundaria.

Entre los 37 miembros de esta mesa directiva esán incluidos miembros de la Mesa Directiva Educativa del Estado de Texas, profesores(as), psicólogos encargados(as) del consejo escólar, directores(as) de escuelas, administradores(as), miembors de mesas directivas educativas locales, representantes del gobierno estatal, y representantes de organizaciones de padres de familia, guarderías y otras instituciones que proveen servicios a la niñez, miembros de facultades universitarias, y miembros del sector empresarial. A través del curso de la revisión de la problemática de esta investigación, de hacer consideraciones referentes a presentaciones de expertos en la materia, discusiones con pedagogos y educadores y otros participantes en las audiencias públicas que se llevaron a cabo en varias regiones del estado, esta mesa directiva ha desarrollado una perspectiva de un nuevo sistema integral para la educación de la niñez desde el nacimiento hasta la primaria enfocado en el aprendizaje infantil y el cual se caracteriza por la colaboración y esfuerzo mutuo para alcanzar metas desafiantes y valiosas.

Necesitamos un Cambio

La mesa directiva reconoce que el el sistema de hoy día para educar a la niñez desde la infancia, la primaria.inclusive, batalla para poder responder a las demandas de la preparación de este sector de la población Texana. La población a la cual las escuelas proveen servicios educativos ha sufrido de cambios dramáticos. En el año escolar de 1992-93, etnias y grupos minoritarios se han convertido en la mayoría de estudiantes en los grados de pre-kindergarten hasta el sexto grado; un poco más de la mitad de los estudiantes en pre-kinder, pre-primaria y primaria en Texas han sido clasificados como económicamente marginales.

Las escuelas públicas de hoy día frecuentemente toman esta diversa y cambiante población de niños(as) y tratan de ajustarlas a una estructura de organización distanciada por una o dos generaciones. En esta estructura los estudiantes que no llevan a cabo su trabajo de acuerdo a la norma del grupo se les contiene en grupos de aptitudes académicas más bajas. Los estudiantes que no alcanzan los estándares de aptitud establecidos durante los primeros nueve meses son asignados a cursos de transición o se les retiene en el mismo grado, un procedimiento condenado más y más por la investigación e implica que éste es un índice que predice si un estudiante va a abandonar sus estudios. Los estudiantes son retenidos desproporcionalmente al final del primer grado. Casi 27,000 estudiantes de primer grado de Texas reprobaron al final del año escolar de 1991-92. Esta tasa de retención en el primer año de10.3 por ciento es casi el doble de la tasa general de 5.2 por ciento.

En muchos casos, las escuelas se ajustan y hacen cambios respondiendo a los requerimientos de cambio locales, estatales y federales al implementar procedimientos que obstaculizan, en lugar de sustentar y promover el éxito educativo de nuestra niñez. Mientras el sector legislativo relaciona la responsabilidad de estos procedimientos a resultados de la demostración de aprendizaje medido por exámenes estándares, muchas escuelas se limitan a utilizar métodos que simplemente ejercitan la memoria y remedios que dan resultados rápidos con respecto a esos exámenes. Con la intención de cubrir el currículo educativo estatal y preparar estudiantes en los primeros grados para tomar los exámenes que deben tomar en años tardíos, las escuelas "empujan" el currículo de la educación primaria a los años de la pre-primaria y pre-kindergarten. Durante las visitas a las escuelas en diversas regiones del estado, los miembros de esta mesa directiva se reunieron con otros educadores y padres de familia quienes tienen fuertes objeciones a los procedimientos que sujetan a estos estudiantes tan jóvenes a tener que tomar estos exámenes estandarizados y los cuales saben de muy pocas alternativas para determinar el progreso académico de estos estudiantes para alcanzar las metas educativas estatales.

En un esfuerzo de negociar los problemas de la diversidad en la población, cuestiones de retención de estudiantes, cuestiones de un currículo inapropiado, cuestiones de procesos de examinaciones inapropiados y la naturaleza cambiante

PERSPECTIVA ANTICUADA	NUEVA PERSPECTIVA
Los estudiantes se adaptan a una estructura escolar pre-organizada.	Las organización escolar da lugar a la participación activa del estudiante en el proceso de aprendizaje.
El aprendizaje transcurre en intervalos distinguibles de nueve meses; los estudiantes que no satisfacen una serie de expectativas son retenidos y se les proveen cursos de recuperación.	Un calendario flexible ofrece tiempo en abundancia para el enriquecimiento y los métodos didácticos avanzados; prevención e intervención temprana asegura que la niñez no se retrase desde el principio.
El aprendizaje se organiza y se regula en términos del tiempo que el estudiante está en el aula escolar.	El curriculo da lugar a un progreso continuo; el contenido llena los requisitos de estándares rigurosos; es relevante, cautiva al estudiante y tiene significado para los estudiantes.
Los profesores imparten conocimiento a través de la cátedra.	Los educadores facilitan el aprendizaje, la organización del aprendizaje siguiendo principios experimentales, sus lados fuertes y las metas educativas.
La organización de las maneras de agrupar a los estudiantes están basadas en la edad y en las aptitudes que los estudiantes muestran en su récord académico.	Un sistema de agrupación flexible se lleva a cabo al combinar diversas edades, aptitudes y niveles de logros académicos; los profesores reconfiguran estos grupos basados en las necesidades académicas de aprendizaje individuales.
La evaluación del estudiante y del rendimiento escolar son basadas exclusivamente en los resultados que se obtienen de exámenes estandárizados.	La evaluación es continua, utiliza múltiples maneras de asesorar el rendimiento académico del estudiante e informa los métodos didácticos y la evaluación de estos programas.
El sistema educativo está aislado de otros sistemas y servicios sociales de la comunidad.	El sistema educativo colabora con otros sistemas de la comunidad y servicios provistos a la niñez y sus familiares.

de la educación escolar, esta mesa directiva creó una nueva visión de la educación a nivel de pre-primaria y de la primaria basada en una pedagogía y la práctica educativa adaptada apropiadamente a las fases de desarrollo humano. Esta mesa directiva define la **pedagogía apropiada para las fases de desarrollo humano desde el nacimiento hasta los 8 años de edad** como programas y prácticas que (1) enfocan el los principios y estadios de desarrollo infantil; (2) promueven intereses y comprensión a nivel individual;(3) valoran la diversidad cultural y lingüística; y (4) que reconocen la naturaleza social del aprendizaje. Cuando se habla de una educación apropiada para las fases del desarrollo de la niñez no quiere decir que nuestras expectativas con respecto al rendimiento del estudiante bajarán de nivel. Esto no sacrificará la calidad académica o el rigor intelectual.

Las prácticas educativas congruentes con medidas pedagógicas apropiadas alas fases de desarrollo infantil están fundadas en el principio de que éstos jóvenes estudiantes derivan su conocimiento a base de sus experiencias y actividades al interactuar en su medio ambiente físico y social. Estos han sido construidos con una visión de la educación que asegura que cada niño(a) estará bien preparado para un futuro de éxito académico y personal al aportarle una sólida base cimentada en la lectura y demonstración de dominio de las metas educativas. Éstas expanden las oportunidades de aprendizaje al acomodar la cultura, el lenguaje y la naturaleza idiosincrática del aprendizaje de cada niño(a).

Al hacer un llamado para promover el cambio, esta mesa directiva persigue el instalar una nueva energía en los corazones y las mentes de todos los Texanos a quienes les concierne la educación desde el nacimiento hasta la escuela primaria. Específicamente, la visión de la reorganización de la educación pre-escolar y primaria en Texas, está constituida de los siguientes aspectos:

- ☐ **un currículo congruente con una pedagogía apropiada para las fases de desarrollo humano** la cual utiliza métodos de agrupamiento de estudiantes flexibles y dirigido continuamente a una participación e involucramiento activo y una presentación de conocimiento através de temas y unidades interdisciplinarias.
- ☐ **Un calendario y un horario escolar** que permite un año flexible y que permite extender el año escolar para acomodar la naturaleza personal del aprendizaje de cada estudiante a su propio ritmo.
- ☐ **Oportunidades abundantes** para cada niño(a) para alcanzar los altos estándares de realización a través del enriquecimiento y aceleración de todas las actividades de aprendizaje en una manera continua.

☐ **Demostración de dominio de aprendizaje basado en los resultados de las examinaciones,** los cuales muestran un progreso contínuo de los estudiantes hacia los estándares académicos y que permiten los estudiantes un movimiento contínuo a través del sistema en cuanto logran los estándares establecidos.

SINOPSIS DE RECOMENDACIONES

Para lograr alcanzar esta nueva visión, la mesa directiva de la educación pre-primaria y primaria recomienda las siguientes estrategias para la implementación de una pedagogía apropiada para las fases del desarrollo infantil a nivel pre-primaria y a los primeros tres grados de la escuela primaria en Texas:

☐ Enriquecer y fomentar el crecimiento total intelectual, físico, emocional y social de cada niño(a). El reconocimiento de que el desarrollo y el crecimiento de cada niño se lleva a cabo en fases de desarrollo humano, los cuales se esculpen por un modo de aprendizaje personal y un ritmo, los cuáles son únicos al individuo.

☐ Proveer un currículo basado en una pedagogía congruente a la edad del estudiante, que sea interdisciplinario y enriquecido para apoyar el crecimiento académico y personal de cada niño(a), y que está conectado y claramente articulado a las metas educativas locales y estatales.

☐ Apoyar la realización del éxito académico con fundamentos sólidos en lectura. Asegurar que la instrucción de la lectura sea apropiada a la edad y al individuo y que apoye la compleja interacción entre el lector y el texto. Estructurar el currículo de la instrucción de lectura para proveer explícita y sistemáticamente un entrenamiento integrado de una conciencia fonémica y una comprensión de los principios del alfabeto alimentado por una literatura rica en contenido y significado y un ambiente de aprendizaje rico en lenguaje.

☐ Agrupar estudiantes flexiblemente para apoyar las necesidades individuales de cada uno de ellos. También se recomienda no utilizar los previos resultados académicos de los estudiantes en la percepción y la determinación de sus habilidades para mantenerlos dentro de ciertos límites.

☐ Eliminar el reprobar y retener a los estudiantes en el mismo grado. Utilizar el currículo, las prácticas de instrucción educativa y los calendarios y horarios escolares que eliminan la necesidad de retener a los estudiantes en un grado.

☐ Proveer una gama de elementos de aprendizaje que sea continua, "sin costuras", desde la educación pre-primaria hasta el décimo segundo grado.

☐ Implementar estrategias de examinación basadas en resultados de progreso académico que son congruentes con los principios de una pedagogía apropiada a las fases de desarrollo humano las cuales enaltecen los principios curriculares e instructivos.

☐ Preparar educadores de los grados de pre-primaria y primaria con programas que integran el conocimiento adquirido por la pedagogía y el conocimeinto del desarrollo humano.

☐ Apoyar a estos educadores y a los estudiantes al sostener proporciones de estudiantes a profesores las cuales sustentan las necesidades del desarrollo infantil.

☐ Solicitar activamente la participación de padres de familia y de familias que contribuyan significativamente a la educación de sus hijos(as).

☐ Coordinar los programas de cuidado infantil, programas educativos en guarderías basados en las comunidades o en las escuelas y en primarias para asegurar una transición "sin costuras" entre éstos y progreso continuo para cada niño(a).

☐ Establecer asociaciones entre los proveedores de servicios y agencias de salud y servicios de asistencia pública, escuela maternal, guarderías e instituciones del cuidado infantil, organizaciones de la comunidad, instituciones culturales y empresarios locales para que se comprometan a satisfacer las necesidades de servicios educativos, de salubridad y de asistencia pública para los individuos y la comunidad.

Preguntas y Respuestas: Educación "Apropiada" para las Fases del Desarrollo Humano

¿Qué es una educación "apropiada" para las fases del desarrollo humano?

- ☐ La educación "apropiada" a las fases del desarrollo de la niñez enfoca en el aprendizaje del estudiante y está adaptada a los estadios de desarrollo infantil.
- ☐ La educación "apropiada" a las fases de desarrollo humano no culmina en la disminución de las expectativas de los resultados académicos; se adhiere a altos estándares y resultados del progreso académico personal.
- ☐ Hay cuatro dimensiones a la educación "apropiada" a las fases de desarrollo humano:
  - Es apropiada a la edad del estudiante– está enfocado en el desarrollo y crecimiento infantil.
  - Es apropiada a la individualidad– fomenta los intereses y la comprensión individual del estudiante.
  - Es apropiada en términos culturales y lingüísticos– valora la rica variedad de los lenguajes y de las experiencias de aprendizaje que el estudiante trae al aula escolar.
  - Sustenta la naturaleza social del aprendizaje– provee abundantes oportunidades para la interacción entre maestro(a)s y estudiantes.

¿Las prácticas educativas de hoy día son "apropiadas" para las fases del desarrollo de la niñez?

Muchas de las técnicas formales utilizadas en aulas escolares de grados del prekindergarten a la primaria no son apropiadas para el desarrollo de estos jóvenes estudiantes, Por ejemplo:

- ☐ Los niño(a)s quienes supuestamente no están "listos" para el kindergarten o el primer grado se les mantiene fuera de estas clases y son puestos en programa de transición extraordinario de un año.
- ☐ Tanto como un 10 por ciento de estudiantes del primer grado en Texas son "retenidos" cada año.

☐ Muchas escuelas "empujan" el currículo de la primaria a los grados más tempranos de la pre-primaria para preparar a los jóvenes a los exámenes que tomarán en años posteriores.

☐ Un gran grupo de actividades dirigidas por el(la) maestro(a) domina las aulas escolares de estos grados en muchos distritos escolares.

☐ Las escuelas son presionadas a recurrir a ejercicios de memorización y a métodos de "remedios" que dan resultados rápidos en exámenes estandarizados.

¿Hay tan sólo una manera de implementar programas educativos "apropiados" para las fases de desarrollo humano?

☐ ¡No! La educación apropiada a las fases de desarrollo humano no es una rígida serie de mandatos que dictan la práctica, sino más bien, una filosofía para colaborar con los estudiantes.

☐ Precisamente porque las aulas escolares "apropiados" para las fases de desarrollo humano no son solamente apropiados para la edad del estudiante, sino son también apropiadas al individuo, que éstas no son iguales las unas a las otras.

¿Cómo están organizadas las aulas escolares "apropiadas" para las fases de desarrollo humano?

☐ La organización de las aulas escolares está basada en los siguientes principios del aprendizaje infantil:

- Secuencias de fases de crecimiento y cambios predecibles ocurren durante la niñez; el crecimiento y desarrollo de cada niño(a) ocurre diferencialmente dentro de estas secuencias al paso del tiempo.
- Todos los estudiantes llegan a la escuela con un conocimiento básico del mundo que les rodea.
- A todos los niño(a)s les gusta buscar soluciones a problemas concretos.
- Los niños desarrollan un entendimiento de sí mismos, de otros, y de su medio ambiente en base a experiencias activas de aprendizaje, observación y de la interacción con sus amistades, maestro(a)s y otros adultos.
- Todos los niño(a)s pueden alcanzar las expectativas locales y estatales.

☐ El aula escolar "apropiada" para las fases de desarrollo humano se dirige a estos principios por medio del establecimiento de:

- grupos flexibles, heterogéneos y didácticos o instructivos;
- centros de aprendizaje;
- agrupaciones de edades mixtas;
- unidades temáticas con un currículo interdisciplinario; y
- aprendizaje cooperativo.

¿Cuál es el papel del(de la) maestro(a)?

☐ Lo(a)s profesore(a)s traen el conocimiento de la pedagogía, del desarrollo infantil y de cómo los niño(a)s aprenden en sus clases.

☐ Lo(a)s profesore(a)s saben que el estudiante construye el significado al explorar y comprender el medio ambiente físico, social, y académico.

☐ Lo(a)s profesore(a)s combinan métodos didácticos e instructivos que establecen un nexo con el estudiante a un medio ambiente de aprendizaje que es activo, rico y multifacético.

☐ Lo(a)s profesore(a)s inician las actividades de aprendizaje y también responden a las iniciativas del estudiante.

¿El currículo "apropiado" para las fases de desarrollo humano está empobrecido?

☐ ¡No! El currículo "apropiado" para las fases de desarrollo humano enfatiza el aprendizaje activo y el entendimiento profundo. Está enfocado en cómo los niño(a)s aprenden y les provee de un currículo riguroso, de oportunidades de alta calidad para adquirir conocimiento dentro de las materias específicas y también transgrede los límites de éstas.

☐ Los temas en el currículo son específicos a la materia e de conocimiento interdisciplinarios con los cuales se "teje" una red que apoya continuamente al progreso estudiantil hacia rigurosos estándares y metas académicas.

☐ El estudiante toma un papel activo en la exploración temática de estas áreas. Así, participan en el diseño didáctico del currículo.

☐ El estudiante está "sumergido" en una experiencia educativa que refuerza el entendimiento en lugar de enfocar en cubrir materias y cumplir con aptitudes aisladas.

¿Los programas educativos "apropiados" para las fases del desarrollo de la niñez contienen rigurosas expectativas académicas?

☐ ¡Sí! Programas "apropiados" para las fases del desarrollo de la niñez proveen una sólida base académica con altos ideales para cada alumno(a).

☐ Cada niño(a) se dirige hacia el logro de rigurosas metas académicas y personales dentro de aulas escolares apropiadas a la edad y características individuales.

☐ Las condiciones del ambiente del aprendizaje están diseñados para apoyar los intereses y el entendimiento individual de cada estudiante y contribuye al desarrollo de sus aptitudes críticas y de sus aptitudes para resolver problemas.

¿Los programas "apropiados" para las fases del desarrollo infantil son adecuados sólo para ciertos tipos de estudiantes?

☐ ¡No! Programas "apropiados" para las fases del desarrollo de la niñez se dirigen a satisfacer las necesidades individuales de cada estudiante, sus intereses, su lenguaje, su cultura, su estilo personal y su ritmo de aprendizaje.

☐ Ellos se estructuran en base a los aspectos fuertes de cada estudiante en lugar de integrar a cada niño(a) a un régimen rígido de programas.

¿Hay "retención" o "promoción social" en estos programas?

☐ ¡No! Los estudiantes no son retenidos en programas "apropiados" para las fases del desarrollo humano– resultados de múltiples investigaciones comprueban con consistencia que el proceso de retener estudiantes perjudica el éxito académico y el amor propio.

☐ Programas "apropiados" para las fases del desarrollo humano están enfocados en la prevención - educadores y familias usan una gama de programas y de servicios para prevenir que se reprueben a los estudiantes incluyendo métodos didácticos mejorados, agrupaciones heterogéneas, proporciones diversas de maestro(a)s a estudiantes y calendarios escolares flexibles para el proveer estudiantes la oportunidad de progresar académicamente a través de estos programas sin quedarse atrás del resto de sus compañero(a)s

☐ La planeación a nivel escolar, el apoyo al estudiante y la implementación de un currículo de progreso continuo crea una atmósfera de altas expectativas y elimina la necesidad de la promoción social (social promotion).

¿Qué es el "dominio" en los programas educativos del pre-kindergarten a la primaria "apropiados" para las fases de desarrollo humano?

- ☐ "Dominio" no se refiere a la adquisición de aptitudes aisladas. Describen el proceso entero por medio del cual cada estudiante desarrolla un entendimiento de un concepto, lo explora a través de varias actividades, crea conocimiento al conectar el entendimiento con otras materias de otras áreas y aplica este conocimiento para resolver problemas.

- ☐ El currículo "apropiado" para las fases del desarrollo humano se enfoca en la adquisición del conocimiento en transcurso a largo plazo. Las aptitudes esenciales se enfatizan en aprendizaje adaptado a corto plazo para facilitar la resolución de problemas. Dominio no es visto en términos de lecciones individuales o de actividades diarias de aprendizaje, sino es un estándar de progreso académico adecuado a las fases del desarrollo humano.

¿Por qué es importante la lectura para la visión de la educación pre-primaria y primaria para esta mesa directiva ?

- ☐ Uno de cada cuatro Texanos adultos lee a los niveles más bajos de alfabetismo; el estado ocupa lugares más bajos que el promedio nacional de alfabetismo entre adultos.

- ☐ Varias investigaciones muestran que los niño(a)s que no son eficientes en la lectura durante los grados de la primaria corren un alto riesgo de reprobar.

- ☐ El progreso académico depende de la capacidad de leer, escribir y de comunicarse eficazmente. Las tres aptitudes son partes esenciales del alfabetismo, y son requisitos para la participación en la escuela y la comunidad. Mientras que el desarrollo de las aptitudes orales–del habla y de la comprensión auditiva–comienza desde el parto y las aptitudes de la escritura se crean con el transcurso de años y la lectura requiere de un enfoque desde el desarrollo en los años tempranos de educación formal.

- ☐ Un extenso número de estudios demuestra que programas efectivos de alfabetismo de edad temprana incorporan explícita y sistemáticamente la instrucción de conciencia fonética (la habilidad de detectar sonidos en el habla) y el conocimiento de los principios del alfabetismo (la habilidad de relacionar letras con los sonidos que simbolizan) dentro de un contexto semántico, y un medio ambiente rico en lenguaje y literatura.

¿La evaluación del estudiante es parte de los programas educativos "apropiados" para las fases del desarrollo humano?

- ☐ Una evaluación continua del estudiante ayuda a individualizar la instrucción como una parte integral de programas "apropiados" para las fases del desarrollo humano.
- ☐ Los resultados de esta evaluación del progreso del estudiante y de la eficacia de los programas educativos deben de informárseles a los educadores y a las familias.
- ☐ Los programas utilizan múltiples, medidas de evaluación basadas en el progreso académico del estudiante y en observaciones informales de los padres de familia y de los maestros en lugar de basar la evaluación del desarrollo y crecimiento del estudiante en la calificación de un solo examen.
- ☐ La evaluación funciona como monitor del progreso del estudiante en base a estándares de progreso académico establecidos.

¿Cuál es el papel de los padres de familia y de las familias con las escuelas que implementan programas educativos "apropiados" para las fases de desarrollo humano?

- ☐ El involucrar a los padres de familia es crítico para el éxito educativo durante los años tempranos del prekindergarten a la primaria que en ningún otro periodo; es el pilar del éxito de estos programas.
- ☐ Los programas educativos "apropiados" para las fases de desarrollo humano activamente involucran y apoyan a los padres de familia como socios en el desarrollo educativo y personal de la niñez.

Informe Político Concerniente a la educación pre-primaria y primaria

Mision

La misión de la educación pre-primaria y primaria es la de sustentar el crecimiento intelectual, emocional, social y físico de todos los niños. Nuestra responsabilidad como padres de familia y educadores, miembros de la comunidad y ciudadanos, es la de crear un medio ambiente o una ecología educativa que sea congruente a una pedagogía apropiada para las fases del desarrollo infantil, la cual prepare a la niñez para el éxito académico en la escuela y la participación activa en la vida cívica, económica y cultural de sus comunidades.

Filosofía

La educación pre-primaria y primaria en Texas está compuesta de programas y una ecología o un medio ambiente educativo los cuales otorgan servicios infantiles desde el nacimiento hasta el ingreso a la secundaria. En el curso de estos años tan importantes, el desarrollo intelectual, emocional, social y físico de un(a) niño(a) está sustentado por el hogar, la escuela y la comunidad. Así es como los(as) niños(as) aprenden y se desarrollan diferentemente. Familias, educadores y miembros de la comunidad sustentan estas diferencias por medio de la educación y toda la ecología ambiental de cuidado infantil, los cuales proveen a cada niño(a) con el tiempo, las oportunidades y los recursos necesarios para lograr las metas de la educación pre-primaria y primaria. Esperamos nada menos que el logro de cada estudiante de una firme base en lectura y el dominio del currículo apropiado a estas fases del desarrollo humano en la pre-primaria y la primaria. Estamos comprometidos a cambiar este sistema y ecología educativa, cuidado infantil y apoyo de la comunidad para asegurar que cada niño(a) alcance estos objetivos.

Una educación apropiada a las fases del desarrollo humano del estudiante para niveles de pre-kindergarten hasta la primaria, debe ser enfocada en los principios y las fases del desarrollo infantil, sustenta intereses individuales y la comprensión, reconoce la naturaleza social del aprendizaje y valora la diversidad cultural y lingüística. Los programas efectivos de pre-kindergarten y de primaria expanden las oportunidades para el aprendizaje—enriquecen el currículo, sustentan la instrucción, y expanden el tiempo que se utiliza para el aprendizaje adaptado para la cultura, el lenguaje, aprendizaje y ritmo personal del estudiante. Programas efectivos de pre-kindergarten y de primaria ayudan a crear comunidades responsables del cuidado de la niñez, las cuales demuestran respeto a los demás y el estar comprometidos a los valores colectivos, y enfatizan la importancia de sustentar el amor propio de cada estudiante a través del medio ambiente, el currículo y la instrucción escolar. Los programas más efectivos establecen un fuerte nexo entre la familia y la escuela.

Una educación apropiada a las fases del desarrollo del estudiante para niveles de pre-kindergarten hasta la primaria está basada en el principio de que cada niño(a) construye su fuente cognoscitiva de vivencias o experiencias de interacción con el medio ambiente físico y social. Programas de educación de pre-kindergarten Los programas efectivos de pre-kindergarten entabla un nexo con cada estudiante en un contexto de aprendizaje multi-dimensional, el cual combina instrucción y juego para crear una base para el futuro éxito académico y personal del estudiante. La educación primaria se estructura en base a estos fundamentos para fomentar el desarrollo del sentido de independencia e incrementar las habilidades cognoscitivas y las oportunidades de aprender que fomentan las capacidades de crítica, la resolución de problemas, la exploración y la creatividad.

Organización

Los programas efectivos de pre-kindergarten y de primaria están organizados alrededor de los estudiantes a quienes se les está proveyendo estos servicios. La educación del estudiante de temprana edad o educación maternal provee servicios educativos en guarderías, o en pre-kindergarten, o en los grados de primaria. La educación primaria se extiende desde el ingreso a la primaria hasta la secundaria. Los educadores de la escuela maternal, del pre-kindergarten y la primaria deben implementar prácticas instructivas, estructuras de organización, y patrones de selección de empleados para prevenir el abandono de los estudios en fases tempranas de la carrera educativa de los estudiantes y asegurar que ningún estudiante sea reprobado. El desarrollo intelectual, emocional, social, y físico se apoya con un currículo, instrucción, y organización del aula escolar apropiada para las fases del desarrollo humano de cada estudiante, en lugar de al nivel específico del grado del estudiante. A través de Ecologías o atmósferas instructivas que son apropiadas individualmente y a la edad de cada estudiante, los educadores cultivan la comprensión del currículo y apoyan el progreso hacia el logro de las metas educativas.

Currículo

Todos los niños vienen a la escuela equipados con el conocimiento y las habilidades que aprenden de sus familias y de sus comunidades. El currículo apropiado a las fases del desarrollo infantil para el pre-kindergarten y la primaria está estructurada en base a estos principios para proveer al estudiante con un gama de oportunidades para adquirir comprensión en la materia y permitir la expresión y los pensamientos creativos. La lectura es una habilidad fundamental la cual sustenta el logro de las metas educativas de cada estudiante. La capacidad de comprender y utilizar lenguaje escrito y comunicarse oralmente efectivamente es crítica para la comprensión del currículo y proporcionar un nexo cognoscitivo profundo con el mundo fuera de la escuela para cada estudiante.

Un currículo apropiado a las fases del desarrollo humano promueve el aprendizaje continuo y el crecimiento intelectual, emocional, social, y físico. Así, los estudiantes logran la comprensión a través de instrucción interdisciplinaria y actividades temáticas. El currículo está estructurado en base a los intereses, experiencias, y los recursos de las comunidades de los estudiantes para entablar un nexo entre la adquisición de las habilidades esenciales y el conocimiento de las metas educativas de la educación de pre-kindergarten o maternal y primaria para cada niño(a).

La ensenanza y la instruccion

La instrucción a nivel de pre-kindergarten y de primaria está centrada en el estudiante, multifacética y sistemática. Las actividades en el aula escolar desafían la comprensión del estudiante y son reforzadas por la diversidad entre los estudiantes. La instrucción se dirige a la cultura, los lenguajes, y los métodos de aprendizaje personal de todos los estudiantes. Profundización de la comprensión, en lugar de nada más cubrir el material, guía la interacción entre los maestros y los estudiantes. Estos jóvenes estudiantes progresan a través del currículo al suplementarlo con continuas oportunidades para la aceleración y apoyo de su enriquecimiento académico.

Los profesores facilitan la comprensión a través de una variedad de escenarios, técnicas, y estrategias de agrupamiento heterogéneo. Así, ellos fomentan el éxito y los logros académicos con los que se alcanzan las metas educativas a través de un aprendizaje el cual está orientado a las aptitudes del estudiante. En programas apropiados a las fases del desarrollo humano, los estudiantes son agrupados flexiblemente para promover la comprensión del individuo, y su carrera no es "seguida" en base a la percepción de sus capacidades. Los estudiantes pueden ser organizados en grupos de aprendizaje de edad mixta basados en las fases de desarrollo humano en lugar de niveles específicos a cada grado escolar.

Estrategias de evaluacion del estudiante

Las estrategias de examinación y evaluación del estudiante las cuales son apropiadas a las fases de desarrollo humano miden la comprensión y al mismo tiempo ejercitan el pensamiento. Esta estrategia es basada en la ejecución y es significativa. Esta estrategia de examinación está desarrollada y muy conectada al currículo y la instrucción escolar. No es utilizada para excluir estudiantes de oportunidades ni de programas educativos. La diversidad entre lenguajes, culturas y entre individuos está sustentada por el proceso de evaluación del estudiante. El logro y el éxito se refleja a través de una variedad de medidas y de actividades continuas. Las estrategias de examinación del pre-kindergarten hasta la pre-primaria traza el curso en el mapa del progreso del estudiante y del mejoramiento de los programas a través de una gama de aptitudes y conocimiento.

El principal propósito de la evaluación del estudiante es el de informar a los educadores, estudiantes, y las familias del progreso de los estudiantes hacia las metas educativas para la educación de pre-kindergarten y primaria. La evaluación de estudiantes apropiada para las fases del desarrollo humano provee a los educadores de información que necesitan para ajustar la práctica educativa en el aula escolar alrededor de las necesidades y la fortaleza de cada estudiante. Esta facilita la asociación entre educadores y las familias al enfocar en el desarrollo personal y académico de cada estudiante.

El sistema de evaluación del estudiante provee índices de responsabilidad o de justificación de la existencia de programas educativos. Estrategias de evaluación del estudiante apropiada a las fases del desarrollo de la niñez comunica el progreso hacia los estándares de responsabilidad o justificación a través de la examinación de todos los componentes de los programas de pre-kindergarten y primaria—evaluación de medidas múltiples de los resultados académicos estudiantiles, niveles de preparación de los profesores, e índices de involucramiento de los padres de familia. Evaluación de estos programas de estos escenarios académicos está basada en sondeos de muestras de resultados académicos estudiantiles en lugar de un examen administrado universalmente y el cual se basa en referencia a la norma de la población.

Capacitación, contratación y desarrollo profesional

Los educadores que trabajan con jóvenes estudiantes están preparados para lograr que la misión y la filosofía de la educación de pre-kindergarten y primaria y se convierta en la realidad educativa Texana. Los educadores de estos grados son capaces de satisfacer adecuadamente las necesidades propias de la edad y la fase del desarrollo del estudiante al completar su preparación de un programa el cual incluye una fuerte base en las letras y filosofía y en el estudio de la pedagogía integrada al conocimiento del desarrollo infantil. Los educadores son plenamente remunerados por su dedicación, entrenamiento y experiencia. Oportunidades para el desarrollo profesional son abundantes en actividades continuas y planeadas para maestro(a)s, administradores, consejero(a)s psicólogo(a)s y otros miembros profesionales que sustentan las funciones de estos cuerpos. La capacitación profesional de los educadores está localizada y basada en cada escuela y se enfoca en el aprendizaje del estudiante.

Los educadores de los grados de pre-kindergarten hasta la primaria participan activamente en decisiones que afectan los resultados académicos estudiantiles. Son apoyados a través de una proporción de maestro(a)s a estudiantes que predica las necesidades de los estudiantes y cuya práctica de instrucción didáctica es apropiada a las fases del desarrollo de la niñez. Educadores en estos programas participan activamente en el desarrollo del currículo y de los materiales de instrucción y didácticos para asegurar que cada estudiante logre las metas de la educación de pre-kindergarten a la primaria.

Colaboración de la familia y de la Comunidad

El óptimo aprendizaje y desarrollo personal dependen de la seguridad y la orientación familiar, de la buena alimentación y salud, y de altos niveles de colaboración entre el hogar, la escuela y la comunidad. El que los padres de familia y las familias se involucren en la educación de sus hijo(a)s es esencial para su desarrollo intelectual y éxito académico. Esto es esencial para el éxito de programas de educación temprana, del pre-kindergarten a la primaria. Los educadores desarrollan programas exitosos al responder a las necesidades cambiantes de las comunidades a las cuales les sirven. Proveen liderazgo a las comunidades al darle capacidad a los padres de familia y a los familiares de involucrarse en la educación. Educadores en programas apropiados para las fases del desarrollo humano colaboran con los padres de familia y las familias para establecer asociaciones que apoyen el aprendizaje infantil y que refuercen los resultados académicos de las escuelas.

Educadores y administradores y proveedores de cuidado maternal de edad temprana colaboran para proveer una transición "sin costuras" entre los sistemas del sector privado, estatal, y federal de cuidado infantil, maternal, de pre-kindergarten, pre-primaria y primaria. Ellos coordinan recursos dirigidos a las necesidades de los jóvenes estudiantes y de sus familias con programas que son apropiados para las respectivas fases del desarrollo humano y buscan la integración, al mayor grado posible, el cuidado infantil de nivel maternal y pre-kindergarten, contratación, y locales para los programas. La coordinación de los programas de educación infantil y servicios de cuidado infantil da lugar a la diversidad cultural y lingüística de la población estudiantil.

El enfoque en el desarrollo infantil central a la misión y filosofía de la educación del pre-kindergarten a la primaria en Texas está inextricablemente conectado a la salud y el bienestar de los niño(a)s y de sus familias. A nivel estatal, los educadores, los proveedores de estos servicios, y políticos trabajan unidos para apoyar el crecimiento académico y personal de los niño(a)s y el bienestar y la salud de sus familias. En las comunidades, escuelas que proveen servicios de cuidado infantil a niño(a)s que cursan los grados desde el pre-kindergarten hasta la primaria son partes de una red de agencias que proveen servicios de salubridad, de asistencia pública, cuidado infantil, guarderías, organizaciones que proveen educación a los padres de familia, instituciones culturales y empresarios locales trabajan unidos para alcanzar las metas educativas de la educación del pre-kindergarten a la primaria.

Recomendaciones

RECOMENDACIONES PARA IMPLEMENTAR UNA PEDAGOGÍA APROPIADA PARA LAS FASES DEL DESARROLLO HUMANO

A los miembros de la rama legislativa del Estado de Texas:

1) Repasen, corrijan, cambien como sea necesario, adopten legislaciones que provean a la niñez acceso a ecologías educativas que sean apropiadas y que respeten las diferencias en la edad, las características personales e individuales, culturales, y lingüísticas.

2) Extiendan el calendario de instrucción de una manera que ayude a los educadores a prevenir el fracaso académico del estudiante.

3) Provean subsidio económico y fondos fiscales estatales para hacer que la educación de kindergarten sea lleve a cabo en el transcurso de un día completo.

A los miembros de la Mesa Directiva de Educación del Estado de Texas:

1) Establezcan un currículo y unas expectativas para la educación las cuales cautiven a los estudiantes en el proceso de aprendizaje y que apoye continuamente el progreso de cada estudiante hacia los rigurosos estándares educativos.

2) Desarrollen sistemas que atraigan y retengan educadores que estén bien preparados y que estén acreditados y especializados en educación bilingüe y de edad temprana como la maternal, el pre-kindergarten y la pre-primaria.

A la Agencia de Educación del Estado de Texas:

1) Utilicen el *Informe Político Concerniente a la educación pre-primaria y primaria* como base al identificar las mejores prácticas y al estructurar el desarrollo didáctico, las guías o las iniciativas locales escolares de la educación pre-primaria y primaria.

A los Centros de Servicios Educativos Regionales:

1) Utilicen el *Informe Político Concerniente a la educación pre-primaria y primaria* para desarrollar e implementar asistencia técnica y actividades de desarrollo profesional que sustenten una programática educativa para la pre-primaria y la primaria la cual está centrada en las necesidades de cada niño(a).

A los Distritos Escolares y a Las Escuelas:

1) Implementen las recomendaciones del *Informe Político Concerniente a la educación pre-primaria y primaria* .

2) Establezcan y mantengan expectativas de excelencia para cada niño(a).

3) Establezcan fondos y contraten personal para los programas de pre-primaria a un nivel que provea capacidad máxima de inscripciones para todos los niños de tres y cuatro años que sean elegibles.

4) Provean una ecología educativa en los programas de pre-primaria y primaria que sea segura y estimulante y que fomenten el desarrollo intelectual, emocional, social y físico del estudiante.

A las Comunidades:

1) Apoyen el desarrollo intelectual, emocional, social y físico del estudiante. Reconozcan la importancia crucial de que las familias y las colonias o comunidades se involucren en la educación de cada niño(a), en su desarrollo óptimo y en su crecimiento sano.

2) Preparen a cada estudiante para asegurar su éxito académico, personal y social. Apoyen el crecimiento académico, personal y social de cada estudiante.

RECOMENDACIONES CON RESPECTO A LA CONTRATACIÓN DEL PERSONAL

A los miembros de la rama legislativa del Estado de Texas:

1) Extiendan la proporción de 22 estudiantes por cada 1 maestro(a) hasta el quinto grado.

2) Aumenten la proporción de los fondos que reciben los estudiantes desde el pre-kindergarten hasta el tercer grado. Subsidien este incremento por medio de los fondos distribuidos a través del promedio diario de asistencia (ADA) del Fondo de Programas Escolares (Foundation School Program). Utilicen este incremento en los fondos para reducir la taza de estudiantes a adultos de 22:1 a 22:2 en los programas de pre-primaria y primaria. Al menos uno de estos dos adultos deben de estar certificados como maestros.

A los Distritos Escolares y a Las Escuelas:

3) Provean entrenamiento y capacitación a los adultos quienes trabajan con maestro(a)s certificado(a)s para enseñar en la pre-primaria y primaria afectados por la proporción de 22 estudiantes a 2 maestro(a)s. Basen esta

capacitación en las aptitudes competentes incluidas en la acreditación de Asociado para el Desarrollo Infantil (Child Development Associate).

RECOMENDACIONES PARA MEJORAR EL CURRÍCULO

A los miembros de la Mesa Directiva de Educación del Estado de Texas:

1) Rectifiquen las regulaciones que agrupan elementos esenciales desde el pre-kindergarten hasta el tercer grado y los organizan bajo principios determinados por una filosofía del desarrollo humano en lugar de una organización determinada por categorización de temas y materias.

2) Rectifiquen las regulaciones para reestructurar los elementos esenciales de la educación pre-primaria y primaria para apoyar el progreso continuo del estudiante hacia las metas académicas especificadas en §21.1011 del Código Educativo de Texas (Texas Education Code), basado en la adquisición de aptitudes, profundidad de comprensión y demostración de dominio en varias materias.

3) Adopten sistemas de aprendizaje y de libros de texto de pre-primaria y primaria que alienten una temática instructiva y una didáctica interdisciplinaria las cuales faciliten la implementación de aulas escolares de edades mixtas.

4) Adopten sistemas de aprendizaje y de libros de texto de pre-primaria y primaria que respeten y reflejen la diversidad cultural y lingüística de la población.

A la Agencia de Educación del Estado de Texas:

1) Desarrollen una estructura para la educación pre-primaria y primaria en la cual se enlace un currículo que esté bien balanceado y sea apropiado para las fases del desarrollo humano con la investigación que está al corriente con las más recientes prácticas pedagógicas en el aula escolar apropiadas a las fases del desarrollo humano. Incluyan en esta estructura un apoyo continuo para el progreso del estudiante y apoyen su crecimiento por medio de ejercicios que sean específicos a la materia y unidades o proyectos de naturaleza interdisciplinaria. Den prioridad al desarrollo de estas estructuras fundamentales del pre-kindergarten a los grados de primaria. Desarrollen estructuras para el currículo de la lectura de comprensión en los grados de la primaria los cuales integren una conciencia de la fonética y un entendimiento de los principios alfabéticos con ambientes educativos ricos en literatura de comprensión y en lenguaje.

2) Desarrollen una estructura para el currículo que refleje un alto valor dado a la diversidad cultural y lingüística.

3) Desarrollen guías que aseguren que todos los estudiantes tengan acceso a un currículo, incluyendo aquellos que reciben fondos especiales y categorizados, que sea apropiado para las fases de desarrollo humano.

4) Provean flexibilidad en la utilización de libros de texto por parte de los distritos escolares para fomentar en los distritos escolares el que apoyen la compra de materiales que sean experimentales y apropiados para programas educativos infantiles.

A los Centros de Servicios Educativos Regionales:

1) Provean asistencia técnica a las escuelas y a los distritos escolares que buscan la implementación de un currículo apropiado para las fases del desarrollo humano.

A los Distritos Escolares:

1) Desarrollen un currículo que refleje las más recientes contribuciones de la investigación del aprendizaje y el desarrollo infantil y que esté dirigido a satisfacer las metas académicas de la educación pre-primaria y primaria. Organicen el currículo de tal manera que enfoque en la adquisición de conocimiento que sea específico a la materia y a la vez interdisciplinario. Estructúrenlo de tal manera que se asegure que el estudiante sugiera el contenido del currículo y la manera en la que éste se explora en el aula escolar.

2) No utilicen la previa historia académica del estudiante ni demostraciones previas de aptitud para determinar el acceso de éste(a) al currículo. Desarrollen un currículo que desafíe al estudiante y que apoye el continuo progreso académico estudiantil y la adquisición de conocimiento en todas las áreas académicas.

3) Asegúrense que todos los estudiantes, incluyendo las poblaciones especiales de estudiantes y aquellos quienes reciben los servicios de programas subsidiados por categorías, tengan acceso a un currículo interdisciplinario y apropiado para las fases del desarrollo humano.

4) Establezcan un currículo de lectura del distrito escolar enfocado a lograr las metas educativas a largo plazo y el cual asegure cada estudiante logrará altos niveles de éxito académico por medio de seguridad en sí mismos, en base a sus logros y una firme base en la lectura de comprensión. Estructuren el currículo de lectura de tal manera que éste sustente la compleja interacción entre el lector y el texto con métodos didácticos que sean apropiados a la edad y a las características individuales del estudiante. Provean explícita y

sistemáticamente la integración de entrenamiento y formación de una conciencia fonética y conocimiento de los principios alfabéticos dentro de un medio ambiente rico en literatura y lenguaje.

A las Escuelas:

1) Desarrollen e implementen, por medio de procesos de planeación, un currículo que se dirija a satisfacer las necesidades de la comunidad y las metas que apoyen el progreso académico del estudiante por medio de la adquisición de conocimiento que sea específico a la materia y a la vez interdisciplinario. Aseguren que el currículo aliente al estudiante a tomar un papel activo en la exploración del contenido de estas actividades y de un aprendizaje interdisciplinario.

2) Capaciten a los educadores, administradores y personal de apoyo académico a participar en el desarrollo de las metas del currículo, secuencias y materiales didácticos.

3) No utilicen la previa historia académica del estudiante ni demostraciones previas de aptitud para determinar el acceso de éste(a) al currículo. Desarrollen un currículo que desafíe al estudiante y que apoye el continuo progreso académico estudiantil y la adquisición de conocimiento en todas las áreas académicas.

4) Asegúrense que todos los estudiantes, incluyendo las poblaciones especiales de estudiantes y aquellos quienes reciben los servicios de programas subsidiados por categorías, tengan acceso a un currículo interdisciplinario y apropiado para las fases del desarrollo humano.

5) Aseguren el logro y el éxito del estudiante por medio de un currículo que provea a cada niño(a) con una base firme en la lectura de comprensión. Enfoquen el currículo de la lectura a las metas educativas a largo plazo. Estructuren la instrucción de la lectura de tal manera que ésta sustente la compleja interacción entre el lector y el texto con métodos didácticos que sean apropiados a la edad y a las características individuales del estudiante. Construyan un currículo de lectura de comprensión en el cual las oportunidades para utilizar lenguaje oral y escrito en una variedad de formatos y situaciones prevalezca; impartan sistemáticamente la conciencia de la fonética y conocimiento de los principios alfabéticos; conecten las instrucciones de la lectura a un medio ambiente rico en literatura y de manera tal que tenga un verdadero significado para el estudiante.

6) Mejoren la calidad y aumenten la cantidad de materiales didácticos los cuales reflejen la diversidad cultural y lingüística del aula escolar.

RECOMENDACIONES PARA MEJORAR LA ENSEÑANZA

A los miembros de la rama legislativa del Estado de Texas:

1) Desháganse de los estatutos restrictivos relacionados con los servicios para las poblaciones de estudiantes quienes reciben servicios de educación especial (special student populations) y otros servicios los cuales directa o indirectamente contribuyen a seguir y limitar (tracking) el curso de estos estudiantes basados en percepciones y juicios de su preparación o de su previo historial académico.

A los miembros de la Mesa Directiva de Educación del Estado de Texas:

1) Rectifiquen las regulaciones de tal manera que alienten a los distritos escolares a implementar prácticas pedagógicas que sean apropiadas a las fases del desarrollo humano, incluyendo la creación de programas educativos para edades mixtas y ecologías heterogéneas de aprendizaje los cuales puedan satisfacer las necesidades de la población estudiantil que recibe servicios de educación especial (special student populations) dentro de la estructura educativa normal o institucional (mainstream).

A la Agencia de Educación del Estado de Texas:

1) Creen estructuras que provean una guía a los distritos escolares para implementar prácticas apropiadas a las fases del desarrollo humano utilizadas en los niveles de pre-primaria y primaria.

2) Diseminen prácticas que sean efectivas y apropiadas para las fases del desarrollo humano.

3) Conduzcan evaluaciones de los resultados académicos y sociales de estudiantes en niveles de pre-primaria y primaria en las escuelas que hayan implementado prácticas apropiadas a las fases del desarrollo humano.

A los Distritos Escolares:

1) Implementen prácticas apropiadas a las fases del desarrollo humano para asegurar un alto nivel académico para todos los estudiantes en los niveles de pre-primaria y primaria.

2) Examinen de una manera crítica el uso de ejercicios y cuadernos de trabajo que contengan materiales de aprendizaje pasivo en los grados tempranos de educación. Implementen una instrucción apropiada a las fases del desarrollo humano por medio de materiales didácticos, medios de comunicación y una tecnología que apoyen el aprendizaje activo y que están diseñados compatiblemente con los estadios de desarrollo infantil.

3) Desarrollen una filosofía e implementen una política que articule como meta educativa una verdadera educación bilingüe y la adquisición de una segunda lengua en los distritos escolares. Delineen las metas de estos programas y su relación con otros programas y prácticas educativas en otros distritos escolares.

4) Aumenten el uso, especialmente en los programas de pre-kindergarten y de primaria, de la lengua materna del estudiante como el lenguaje de la enseñanza en el aula escolar.

5) Provean facilidades al aire libre e interiores que apoyen actividades táctiles, experiencias de aprendizaje activo, las cuales son concretas, reales y relevantes para la vida de estos jóvenes estudiantes.

A las Escuelas:

1) Implementen prácticas didácticas que estén fundamentadas en recientes frutos de investigación en desarrollo infantil.

2) Examinen de una manera crítica el uso de ejercicios y cuadernos de trabajo que contengan materiales de aprendizaje pasivo en los grados tempranos de educación. Implementen una instrucción apropiada a las fases del desarrollo humano por medio de materiales didácticos, medios de comunicación y una tecnología que apoyen el aprendizaje activo y que están diseñados compatiblemente con los estadios de desarrollo infantil.

3) Enfoquen la enseñanza y la instrucción para prevenir el fracaso académico del estudiante en lugar de tratar de remediar los casos de estudiantes que han reprobado. Provean a todos los estudiantes con oportunidades que exploren el currículo profundamente, apoyen cada uno de los intereses de estos estudiantes de lograr un alto nivel académico y de crecimiento personal por medio de métodos didácticos avanzados y un continuo enriquecimiento de todas las actividades de aprendizaje.

4) Establezcan una ecología de aprendizaje multisensorial cuyo foco esté centrado en el(la) niño(a) y en la cual los métodos didácticos respondan a los intereses de los estudiantes; fomenten la participación activa del estudiante en cuestiones de su currículo; provean un contexto enriquecido para las múltiples formas que toma la interacción social entre los estudiantes, los maestros y otros adultos, y que, a la vez, forge conecciones con la comunidad a la cual la escuela provee sus servicios.

5) Promuevan el entendimiento a nivel individual por medio del agrupamiento flexible y heterogéneo de estudiantes. Organicen grupos de aprendizaje de edades y niveles de aptitud mixtos. Enfoquen en el fomento del crecimiento académico y personal en lugar de enfatizar las percepciones de demostración

de habilidad o en el historial académico previo. Den lugar a una gran variedad de técnicas de agrupamiento de estudiantes y de estrategias didácticas. Estructuren los grupos de tal manera que se sustente el alto nivel académico y que provea un amplio acceso para los estudiantes quienes reciben servicios especiales (special student populations) en la estructura educativa institucional o normal (mainstream).

6) Valoren la diversidad en la población estudiantil. Utilicen el lenguaje materno, particularmente en la educación de pre-kindergarten o maternal, como el lenguaje primario de instrucción. Provean oportunidades para la diversidad lingüística entre los estudiantes en programas educativos de pre-kindergarten los cuales estimulen al estudiante a participar en comunicación mutua de alumno(a) a maestro(a) y viceversa. Asegúrense de que los materiales didácticos utilizados y otros productos del aula escolar reflejen la diversidad cultural y lingüística de los estudiantes.

7) Creen ecologías de aprendizaje en los programas de pre-kindergarten, pre-primaria y primaria que estimulen el aprendizaje del estudiante por medio de centros de actividades bien definidas y el apoyo de la adquisición de aptitudes sociales y académicas por medio de juegos ya sean iniciados por el(la) niño(a) o estructurado por el(la) maestro(a).

8) Expandan las oportunidades de aprendizaje y fomenten la participación del estudiante en actividades del currículo después del día de clases a niveles posteriores del kindergarten por medio de tareas que promuevan entendimiento y resolución de problemas al cautivar el empeño del estudiante en una variedad de tareas individuales u orientadas al aprendizaje colectivo.

RECOMENDACIONES PARA ELIMINAR LA RETENCIÓN DE LOS ESTUDIANTES

A los miembros de la rama legislativa del Estado de Texas:

1) Creen un fondo económico el cual sustente una proporción de 22 estudiantes a 2 maestros en los programas de educación de pre-kindergarten, de pre-primaria y de primaria. Creen un fondo económico que sustente una proporción de 22 estudiantes a un(a) maestro(a) en los programas que proveen servicios a estudiantes en el quinto grado.

A los miembros de la Mesa Directiva de Educación del Estado de Texas:

1) Rectifiquen las leyes que prohiben la retención de estudiantes en los niveles tempranos educativos del pre-kindergarten y pre-primaria hasta los programas en los grados medios (middle grades).

A la Agencia de Educación del Estado de Texas:

1) Desarrollen guías para los distritos escolares que lleven a la eliminación de la práctica de retención mientras que, al mismo tiempo, se asegure un alto nivel académico para todos los estudiantes. Diseminen prácticas educativas que se hayan comprobado como efectivas en la eliminación de métodos de retención; por ejemplo, proporciones menores de estudiantes a adultos, métodos didácticos avanzados (accelerated instruction), agrupaciones heterogéneas y de edad mixta de estudiantes y horarios flexibles para extender el tiempo del aprendizaje. Indiquen por medio de guías y de diseminación de prácticas efectivas que la eliminación de la retención depende de la utilización una perspectiva total (holistic) y la coordinación de la educación de cada estudiante.

2) Evalúen los resultados de programas experimentales para eliminar la práctica de la retención citada en el código educativo del estado de Texas (Texas Education Code) §21.562 (State-Funded Optional Extended Year Program: Programa de Subsidio Estatal Opcional para la Extensión del Año Escolar). Comparen los resultados de los programas con los programas que han eliminado la práctica de la retención citados en el código educativo del estado de Texas (Texas Education Code) §21.563 (Optional Extended Year Program: Programa de Subsidio Estatal Opcional para la Extensión del Año Escolar).

A los Centros de Servicios Educativos Regionales:

1) Provean capacitación en prácticas para eliminar la retención que se hayan comprobado come efectivas.

2) Colaboren con los programas de la red de escuelas mentoras (network mentor schools) de pre-primaria y primaria que hayan sido reconocidas por la implementación de programas que hayan eliminado la práctica de retención efectivamente.

A los Distritos Escolares:

1) Eliminen las prácticas de retención por medio de métodos de enseñanza que aseguren un alto nivel académico para todos los estudiantes. Empleen un currículo, prácticas didácticas, principios de organización y prácticas de contratación y calendarios escolares que superen la necesidad de retener estudiantes.

2) Incluyan una política y programas que eliminen la retención en los planes de mejoramiento educativo de los distritos escolares.

A las Escuelas:

1) Eliminen la práctica de retener estudiantes utilizando métodos didácticos que aseguren un alto nivel académico para todos los estudiantes. Incluyan estrategias políticas y programas para eliminar la práctica de retener estudiantes en los planes de mejoramiento escolar (campus improvement plans).

2) Capaciten a los administradores, maestro(a)s, y otro tipo de personal en métodos y programas que sean efectivos en la eliminación de la práctica de retener estudiantes.

3) Desarrollen planes para lograr satisfacer las necesidades sociales y académicas de niño(a)s que corren el peligro de ser retenidos, utilizando una asociación profesional de maestro(a)s, administradores, consejeros-psicólogos escolares, y cualquier otra forma de apoyo por parte de la comunidad.

4) Eduquen a las facultades, a los padres de familia, a las familias, y a otros miembros de la comunidad acerca de los efectos negativos de la práctica de la retención y en el futuro académico de estos estudiantes retenidos, su sentido de amor propio y la probabilidad de que ésto los haga abandonar sus estudios y dejar de asistir a la escuela.

5) Colaboren con la asociación profesional de escuelas mentoras (network mentor schools) de educación pre-primaria y primaria quienes han efectivamente implementado estos programas para eliminar la práctica de la retención.

RECOMENDACIONES PARA MEJORAR LA EVALUACIÓN DEL ESTUDIANTE

Al Gobierno Federal:

1) Eliminen las regulaciones que designan que los fondos establecidos en el Capítulo I (Chapter 1 funds) no sean obtenidos por las escuelas que han comprobado que los resultados de examinaciones en su estudiantado han mejorado y que son elegibles para este programa dado que cumplen con los mínimos requisitos (base program eligibility) para estos servicios basados en un criterio económico en lugar de estar basado en los resultados académicos en examinaciones.

2) Reduzcan los intereses asociados con los exámenes cuyos resultados son evaluados en referencia a la norma de logro académico de la población (norm-referenced achievement testing) de jóvenes estudiantes por medio

de la prohibición del uso de éste tipo de exámenes para evaluar programas previos a tercer año y cuyos fondos fiscales son provistos para los grados por el gobierno federal.

3) Permitan que los estados y los distritos escolares que evalúen los programas cuyos fondos fiscales son provistos por el gobierno federal por medio de técnicas de muestreo y de evaluaciones basadas en el resultado académico del estudiantado (performance-based assessments) los cuales son compatibles con los objetivos locales de estos programas.

A los miembros de la rama legislativa del Estado de Texas:

1) Rectifiquen el Código Educativo de Texas §21.557 (f)(2)(a) (Texas Education Code) de tal manera que la definición de un estudiante que corre el riesgo de dejar de asistir a la escuela y abandonar sus estudios en los grados desde el pre-kindergarten hasta sexto año de primaria no dependa en la capacidad académica de un estudiante basado en la singular preparación que se requiere para aprobar un examen o un aspecto educativo (single readiness test) o que sea definido en términos de un examen que se da a principios del año escolar, sino que esta definición se lleva a cabo por medio de múltiples y auténticas medidas de evaluación del estudiante.

2) Rectifiquen el Código Educativo de Texas §35.026 (Texas Education Code: Local Option–Opción Local) para establecer que cualquier examen, ya sea basado en un criterio específico como expectativa académica del estudiantado o un examen cuya evaluación hace referencia a la norma de aprendizaje en la población estudiantil, sea adoptado y administrado por el distrito escolar en manera adicional a el programa de evaluación del estudiante estatal el cual refleje estándares reconocidos a nivel nacional y prácticas educativas que sean apropiadas para las fases del desarrollo humano.

A los miembros de la Mesa Directiva de Educación del Estado de Texas:

1) Fomenten el uso de sistemas locales de evaluación institucional de responsabilidad educativa utilizados en los grados de pre-primaria y primaria que incluyan medidas auténticas del progreso académico del estudiante y que provean índices de la ecología de aprendizaje escolar, de la preparación de los profesores y de la medida en que los padres de familia se involucran en la educación de sus hijo(a)s.

2) Rectifiquen las reglas que permiten métodos de muestreo para ser utilizados como alternativa a la examinación de cada estudiante con respecto a la evaluación de programas, evaluación de la responsabilidad institucional educativa y en comparación con la norma nacional.

3) Desarrollen reglamentos que fomenten prácticas para reportar calificaciones que sean apropiadas a las fases del desarrollo humano como alternativas a las calificaciones otorgadas en forma de letras o números y periodos de reporte de calificaciones de 9 semanas en los grados de primaria.

4) Desarrollen reglamentos que requieran a las casas editoriales que producen examinaciones estandarizadas o cuya evaluación está basada en referencia a la norma de la población utilizadas por los distritos escolares a proveer información de la validez, fiabilidad y la disgregación (desegregated) de normas para la distribución de las subpoblaciones del estado y de los distritos escolares.

A la Agencia de Educación del Estado de Texas:

1) Definan un conjunto de estándares académicos para evaluar el rendimiento del estudiante en programas educativos de pre-primaria y la primaria basados en las metas educativas relacionados al currículo y la enseñanza el cual es congruente con una pedagogía apropiada para las fases del desarrollo humano.

2) Desarrollen guías para un sistema de evaluación de progreso académico del estudiante que mida el curso hacia los estándares deseados al combinar proyectos a corto y largo plazo, evaluaciones en forma narrativa, portafolios que coleccionen el trabajo del estudiante y evaluaciones del progreso académico del estudiante ejecutados en una sola instancia.

A los Distritos Escolares:

1) Absténganse del uso inapropiado de los exámenes estandarizados para jóvenes estudiantes; evalúen cada uno de estos instrumentos en base a su validez y su fiabilidad y utilícenlos solo con el propósito con el que éstos fueron diseñados.

2) Adopten estrategias que enfaticen el respeto y el valor a la diversidad cultural y lingüística y las cuales son congruentes con el currículo y las prácticas didácticas del programa.

3) Desarrollen guías para la evaluación de programas de pre-primaria y primaria que utilizan medidas múltiples, auténticas y observación informal de maestro(a)s y padres de familia con respecto a sus métodos de inscripción, evaluación de la preparación y los programas en los que el estudiante ha sido suscrito.

4) Empleen alternativas a los exámenes de rendimiento cuya evaluación es basada en referencia a la norma de la población estudiantil y evaluaciones de programas como así lo permitan las reglas determinadas por el gobierno estatal y federal.

5) Incorporen tareas tales como diseño, selección y evaluación de instrumentos de evaluación del estudiante en las actividades de capacitación del desarrollo profesional de los educadores.

A las Escuelas:

1) Absténganse del uso de calificaciones reportadas en forma de números o letras durante los grados de la pre-primaria y de la primaria; asesoren el progreso de los estudiantes hacia las metas académicas establecidas por medio de narraciones de la observación de maestro(a)s, listas que chequeen este progreso y de portafolios o colecciones que contienen muestras del trabajo del estudiante; desarrollen un método bien estructurado de comunicación del progreso del estudiante a los padres de familia.

2) Conduzcan conferencias con los padres de familia y el estudiante para comunicar a éstos de su progreso académico y para obtener opiniones de expertos en lo que se refiere al proceso de la inscripción, referencias y de los programas en los que se les coloca a los estudiantes.

A los Padres de Familia:

1) Participen en conferencias entre maestros, padres de familia y estudiantes relacionadas con el progreso académico, el rendimiento y las estrategias de evaluación de sus hijo(a)s.

RECOMENDACIONES PARA MEJORAR LA CAPACITACIÓN DEL PERSONAL ESCOLAR

A los miembros de la rama legislativa del Estado de Texas:

1) Suban el salario promedio de los educadores hasta que éste alcance el salario promedio nacional proyectado para el año escolar de 1997-1998.

2) Apoyen los esfuerzos para desarrollar un sistema total de capacitación profesional para los proveedores de servicios de cuidado infantil y educativos para la niñez a nivel estatal.

A los miembros de la Mesa Directiva de Educación del Estado de Texas:

1) Rectifiquen las reglas que establecen la acreditación de certificados de maestros para que éstas requieran una fuerte preparación del conocimiento de la pedagogía del desarrollo infantil, pedagogía, especialización experto en el contenido de una materia incluyendo la lectura. Asegúrense que los maestro(a)s en programas de pre-primaria y primaria posean conocimiento especializado de la pedagogía y métodos didácticos congruentes con las

fases del desarrollo humano de los jóvenes estudiantes, por medio del sistema de acreditación y certificación para maestro(a)s nuevo(a)s y una estructura para apoyar la capacitación de maestro(a)s con muchos años de experiencia.

2) Rectifiquen los reglamentos para desarrollar el apoyo para la capacitación de administradores con referencia específica a los programas del pre-kindergarten y en los grados de primaria.

3) Desarrollen reglamentos para proveer un curso (track) alternativo para la educación de pre-primaria y la cual reconozca y dé crédito a aquellos quienes tienen una gran experiencia de trabajo de los programas educativos acreditados de pre-kindergarten, pre-primaria y primaria.

4) Adopten medidas de los resultados estatales para la preparación y certificación de maestro(a)s y administradores de los programas educativos de pre-kindergarten, pre-primaria y primaria.

A la Agencia de Educación del Estado de Texas:

1) Desarrollen un sistema de evaluación de la responsabilidad institucional el cual asegure que los estándares basados en los resultados académicos del estudiantado sean consistentes con los que son utilizados hoy día en los programas de educación de los maestro(a)s a través del estado.

2) Desarrollen un sistema completo que coordine la capacitación profesional para aquellos quienes practican y proveen servicios de cuidado infantil y de la niñez en Texas.

3) Desarrollen guías para crear un sistema profesional de preparación y de acreditación de los profesores quienes trabajan en instituciones del cuidado infantil y educación de la niñez las cuales estén acreditadas.

4) Evalúen la eficacia de los sistemas estatales de preparación profesional.

A los proveedores de educación a los profesores:

Mesa Directiva de Coordinación de la Educación Universitaria:

1) Desarrollen reglamentos que ayuden a coordinar crédito académico entre los requisitos de programas de dos años que culminan en el título asociado de cuidado infantil (associate degree in child care) y en el desarrollo de programas de cuatro años o de otros programas que culminen en una licenciatura en la materia.

2) Desarrollen reglamentos dentro del endorso de educación infantil (early childhood endorsement) para que instituciones, ya sean universitarias o de programas alternativos de certificación (alternative teacher certifica-

tion programs), otorguen crédito a la experiencia de trabajo en programas de cuidado infantil acreditados.

Instituciones de educación universitaria:

1) Construyan conecciones más profundas entre los programas educativos de los maestro(a)s y el aprendizaje en práctica en el aula escolar. Establezcan mecanismos que fomenten éstas conecciones que permitan a las facultades universitarias para promover y obtener los requerimientos de permanencia de carrera (tenure) y promoción dentro de actividades que involucren la participación de maestros y estudiantes en la escuela primaria.

2) Contraten más miembros de las "minorías étnicas" y de individuos quienes son bilingües o que dominen dos lenguas para que tomen la carrera de educación en el pre-kindergarten, la pre-primaria y la primaria.

3) Desarrollen un programa académico (degree plans) para la especialización en educación de (early childhood endorsement) pre-primaria y primaria que otorguen crédito por la experiencia laboral en lugares acreditados donde se proveen servicios de guardería y educación de pre-kindergarten. Evalúen el progreso que llevan a cabo las instituciones al otorgar crédito por esta experiencia laboral.

4) Provean a los que estudian los programas para la preparación de maestros con instrucción específica en la enseñanza de la lectura y provean métodos fonéticos y de conciencia alfabética bien estructurados, sistemáticos y que estimulen múltiples sentidos dentro de una ecología educativa de aprendizaje rica en lenguaje y literatura.

Programas alternativos de certificación de maestros:

1) Recluten mayores números de miembros de "minorías étnicas" o de personas que combinen dos lenguas a que tomen la carrera de educación de pre-kindergarten y pre-primaria.

2) Otorguen crédito por experiencia laboral obtenida en establecimientos acreditados donde se proveen servicios para el cuidado infantil o en programas de pre-kindergarten.

RECOMENDACIONES PARA EL APOYO CONTINUO Y LA CAPACITACIÓN

A los miembros de la rama legislativa del Estado de Texas:

1) Extiendan los contratos de los maestros con el propósito de aumentar planeación del desarrollo profesional y tiempo de capacitación cada año,

cinco días más cada año y veinte para el año escolar de 1999, mientras se mantenga un año escolar de 180 días de enseñanza.

2) Compensen al personal por los días de capacitación profesional y no les paguen menos del salario promedio que ganan los maestros en Texas.

A la Agencia de Educación del Estado de Texas:

1) Desarrollen un plan total para el mejoramiento del rendimiento académico de los estudiantes en niveles de pre-kindergarten, pre-primaria y primaria en Texas. Incluyan como su modelo el de entrenador-de-entrenadores (trainer-of-trainers model) en este plan para sustentar la capacitación en este plan. Enfoquen la capacitación y el desarrollo profesional provisto por medio de este modelo en el *Informe Político Concerniente a la Educación Pre-primaria y Primaria* y las recomendaciones que implementan estas estrategias políticas. Coordinen la implementación de este plan con los Centros de Servicios Educativos Regionales (Regional Education Service Centers) y la red profesional de escuelas de educación pre-primaria y primaria.

2) Provean fondos económicos para sustentar el establecimiento de una operación a nivel estatal de una red profesional de mentores para la educación pre-primaria y primaria (statewide early childhood and elementary school mentor network). El propósito de esta red profesional es el de proveer un desarrollo y capacitación continua e intensiva de escuela a escuela. Coordinen actividades de la red profesional de escuelas de educación de pre-kindergarten, pre-primaria y primaria con otras redes de profesionistas para el desarrollo de profesionistas y de aquellos interesados en iniciativas de desarrollo y mejoramiento escolar.

3) Establezcan y coordinen un instituto de desarrollo profesional dirigido a desarrollar materiales didácticos y una tecnología que sea apropiada a las fases del desarrollo humano en varias áreas del currículo.

4) Desarrollen una gama de actividades de capacitación profesional para los asistentes de profesores que trabajen en el área de desarrollo infantil y de la educación primaria.

A los Centros de Servicios Educativos Regionales:

1) Promuevan y apoyen a la red de escuela mentoras para la educación pre-primaria y primaria.

2) Designen y provean capacitación al personal de los Centros de Servicios Educativos Regionales para que se especialicen en educación de pre-kindergarten, pre-primaria y primaria y en estrategias para prácticas didácticas en el aula escolar que sean apropiadas para las fases del desarrollo humano.

3) Colaboren con los distritos que identifican las barreras para el progreso académico de los estudiantes en pre-kindergarten, pre-primaria y en primaria; provean una capacitación que enfoque en desarrollo y crecimiento profesional.

A los Distritos Escolares:

1) Provean a los profesores y a los administradores con el tiempo para reforzar sus conocimientos del desarrollo infantil y de prácticas didácticas que son apropiados para las fases del desarrollo humano en los niveles de pre-kindergarten, pre-primaria y primaria. Alienten la colaboración interescolar y entre profesores y administradores en la educación pre-primaria y primaria.

2) Faciliten la participación de administradores, maestros y otro personal educativo en asociaciones universitarias y escolares (school/university partnerships).

3) Provean fondos económicos para el desarrollo profesional y la capacitación en una manera equitativa y en una cantidad que no sea menor de un 4% de los salarios del personal del distrito escolar.

4) Organicen al personal del distrito escolar con tareas que aseguren que: 1) los profesores mejor calificados y con el más alto nivel de preparación estén disponibles para cada escuela de pre-kindergarten, pre-primaria y primaria; y 2) que cada escuela tenga la habilidad de proveer a los maestros con regularidad de tiempo, aparte del tiempo personal para prepararse y planear, para su capacitación, para la planeación intraescolar e interescolar y para la colaboración en general.

5) Desarrollen instrumentos para asesorar a los maestros y a los administradores los cuales sustenten y den lugar a estrategias y técnicas didácticas de educación pre-primaria y primaria que sean apropiadas para las distintas fases del desarrollo humano.

6) Desarrollen oportunidades profesionales de desarrollo coadjuntas para profesores y otro personal que se dedique a cualquiera de las múltiples facetas de los programas educativos de pre-primaria y primaria.

7) Provean capacitación a los profesores y asistentes de instrucción para que apoyen una educación bilingüe y bicultural que sea apropiada a las fases del desarrollo humano.

A las Escuelas:

1) Provean fondos económicos para el desarrollo profesional en una cantidad que no sea menor de 4% de los salarios del personal escolar. Utilicen una asesoramiento de las necesidades basada en la escuela (campus-based needs assessment) y conduzcan ésta en conjunto con las decisiones del comité

administrativo escolar local (campus site-based decision making committee) para identificar las oportunidades de desarrollo profesional sustentadas por esta iniciativa fiscal.

2) Participen en la red de escuelas mentoras del estado que se dedican a la educación pre-primaria y primaria.

3) Identifiquen maestros-líderes para participar en el desarrollo de los institutos de capacitación profesional educativa a nivel estatal (statewide professional development institutes).

4) Asegúrense que los maestros obtengan el tiempo para participar con regularidad en su preparación, colaboración en general y su capacitación. Este tiempo se les debe otorgar adicionalmente y no en lugar del tiempo necesario para la preparación y planeación de su cátedra.

5) Basándose en el asesoramiento de necesidades basadas en la escuela, provean a los educadores con un desarrollo profesional continuo para asegurarse que cada estudiante logrará el éxito, confianza en sí mismo(a) y una firme base en la capacidad de leer. Incluyan en este tipo de desarrollo profesional la enseñanza de lectura de comprensión por medio de métodos sistemáticos y multi-sensoriales que integren un entrenamiento de la conciencia fonética del estudiante y un conocimiento del alfabeto en una ecología que sea rica en lenguaje, literatura y significado.

6) Provean oportunidades para la coordinación y la planeación entre educadores de pre-kindergarten y pre-primaria y educadores bilingües.

7) Provean oportunidades para la coordinación, la planeación y la capacitación entre educadores de pre-kindergarten, pre-primaria y primaria y educadores en el programa de Head Start u otros programas de cuidado y educación infantil.

RECOMENDACIONES PARA LOS PADRES DE FAMILIA Y FAMILIARES PARTICIPANTES EN EL PROCESO EDUCATIVO

A los miembros de la Mesa Directiva de Educación del Estado de Texas:

1) Adopten una estrategia política y formulen una política con respecto a la participación de los padres de familia en el proceso educativo.

A la Agencia de Educación del Estado de Texas:

1) Implementen una iniciativa a nivel estatal para la participación de los padres y para apoyar las aptitudes de los padres de familia en sus papeles de madres y padres e incrementen su participación en la educación de sus hijo(a)s.

A los Centros de Servicios Educativos Regionales:

1) Provean asistencia técnica a los distritos escolares los cuales deseen implementar un programa de participación de los padres de familia más extenso.

2) Organicen conferencias anuales entre padres de familia y la comunidad en la cuales resalte el enfoque en las innovaciones estratégicas para mejorar la comunicación y la participación de los padres de familia y de otros familiares en el proceso educativo.

A los Distritos Escolares:

1) Provean fondos económicos para sustentar posiciones de "defensores de familias" quienes se encarguen de proveer servicios ya sea en cada escuela o en los equipos integrados verticalmente (vertical team of schools) de escuelas en el distrito escolar.

2) Provean servicios de traducción para materiales didácticos escolares y para conferencias con padres que no hablen Inglés y otros familiares.

3) Implementen programas para familiarizar a los padres de familia con las actividades de aprendizaje y las estrategias que refuercen el estudio en el hogar del estudiante.

4) Implementen programas educativos para padres de familia para aquellos quienes tienen niño(a)s de edades entre recién nacido(a) hasta de 3 años.

5) Trabajen con los medios de comunicación a nivel de la comunidad, tales como la televisión local que provee servicios o franquicias de cablevisión con el propósito de proveer un mayor acceso a las padres de familia de materiales didácticos.

A las Escuelas:

1) Comuníquense ya sea de forma oral o por escrito, con los padres de familia en su lengua materna.

2) Ofrezcan oportunidades para educadores y padres colectivamente para desarrollar estrategias, actividades y recursos para sustentar la diversidad lingüística y cultural en las escuelas.

3) Intercambien información con los padres de familia sobre programas educativos en cada escuela y del progreso de los estudiantes hacia las metas educativas establecidas.

4) Trabajen con la comunidad de profesionistas en educación, salubridad y otros equipos de servicios de asistencia social a que conduzcan visitas regularmente a los hogares y conferencias con padres y familiares del estudiante en las escuelas.

5) Por lo menos una vez al semestre establezcan una sesión con los padres de familia.

A los Padres de Familia:

1) Reconozcan que ultimadamente, la forma óptima de la participación de los padres de familia en el proceso educativo es el que se involucren personalmente en la educación de sus hijo(a)s.

2) Provean a los estudiantes en la educación pre-primaria y primaria con un medio ambiente rico en lenguaje similares a los de sus hogares: hablen frecuentemente con los niño(a)s, escuchen cuidadosamente a sus respuestas, contesten su preguntas y léanles en voz alta o dejen que ellos les lean en voz alta todos los días.

A los que contratan personal:

1) Provean a los padres de familia de niño(a)s en niveles de primaria y pre-primaria con dos días con los padres de familia (parenting days) al año, con paga, para facilitar la visita de los padres de familia al aula escolar, las consultas con sus profesores y para que asistan en actividades escolares.

RECOMENDACIONES PARA FOMENTAR LA COORDINACIÓN DE LOS PROGRAMAS DE CUIDADO INFANTIL Y DE LA EDUCACIÓN PÚBLICA

Al gobierno federal:

1) Expandan los fondos fiscales para los programas de *Head Start* para que para el año de 1997 todos los estudiantes elegibles entre las edades de tres y cuatro años sean provistos con estos servicios.

2) Expandan la capacidad de inscripción del programa de *Head Start* para que las familias en transición a la fuerza laboral puedan permanecer elegibles para recibir los servicios de *Head Start* mientras que sus ingresos rebasen el nivel estadístico de pobreza.

3) Autoricen a los estados a establecer estándares uniformes de calidad de programas y de rendimiento académico del estudiante apropiados a las fases del desarrollo humano para los programas educativos de pre-primaria incluyendo los de *Head Start*.

A los miembros de la Mesa Directiva de Educación del Estado de Texas:

1) Proporcionen fondos para facilitar que el kindergarten sea un programa que dure todo el día.

2) Expandan los subsidios para la educación del cuidado infantil, de pre-primaria y primaria estatal con el propósito de que estas familias tengan acceso a estos servicios.

A los miembros de la Mesa Directiva de Educación del Estado de Texas:

1) Desarrollen estándares para asesorar las facilidades de los programas de pre-kindergarten del distrito.

A la Agencia de Educación del Estado de Texas:

1) Colaboren con el Departamento de Asistencia Pública de Texas (Texas Department of Human Services) y el Proyecto de Colaboración con *Head Start* del Gobernador (Governor's Head Start Collaboration Project) para implementar estrategias específicas de acuerdo con §16.003 del Código de Educación de Texas (Texas Education Code) para proporcionar servicios de asistencia técnica y fomentar la colaboración local entre *Head Start*, los programas de pre-kindergarten y los de cuidado infantil.

2) Colaboren para alinear la elegibilidad de los requisitos para servicios y programas educativos para el cuidado infantil. Participen en acuerdos entre agencias estatales entre aquellas que se dedican a los servicios y programas educativos para pre-primaria y primaria.

3) A los distritos escolares en esfuerzos colaborativos con un cuidado infantil basado en la comunidad de proveedores de cuidado y educación infantil.

A los Centros de Servicios Educativos Regionales:

1) Establezcan una red colaborativa entre los distritos escolares y otros proveedores del cuidado infantil comunitarios.

A los Distritos Escolares:

1) Colaboren con los representantes de instituciones sociales, espirituales, empresariales, y otras instituciones de la comunidad para ayudar a los padres de familia y a los familiares para tener acceso a programas y actividades de preparación para asistir a la escuela. Establezcan, con

proveedores de programas y servicios de cuidado infantil, una red comunitaria que coordinen de los recursos programáticos y facilidades; comuniquen las expectativas de las metas de estos programas educativos y del cuidado infantil.

2) Coordinen y organicen el cuidado infantil antes y después del día escolar utilizando los recursos del distrito escolar y de la comunidad para servir a los niños y a sus familiares.

3) Provean servicios educativos y de cuidado infantil para los hijo(a)s de padres quienes reciben servicios educativos del distrito escolar, por ejemplo los programas para padres quienes son adolescentes o los que están inscritos en programas como *Even Start*.

4) Establezcan programas de pre-kindergarten que aumenten el uso de prácticas en el lenguaje natal de estudiantes con dominio limitado del Inglés (Limited English Proficient).

5) Expandan la capacidad de inscripción en pre-kindergarten para incluir niño(a)s que sean elegibles y cuyo(a)s padres estén dispuestos a pagar colegiatura por estos servicios.

A las Escuelas:

1) Aumenten la comunicación con proveedores de cuidado y educación infantil para poder obtener una perspectiva más completa del niño(a) que ingresa a la escuela pública, faciliten esta transición con programas de pre-kindergarten y de pre-primaria basados (campus-based) en la escuela y proporcionen a los profesores y consejeros-psicólogos con mayor documentación de las fases de desarrollo humano en las que se encuentran lo(a)s niño(a)s quienes recibirán estos servicios.

2) Inviten a la comunidad de profesionistas quienes proveen servicios de pre-kindergarten y de pre-primaria a participar en los equipos locales de administración escolar para tomar decisiones colectivas concernientes al proceso educativo.

A las Comunidades:

1) Conduzcan un asesoramiento de necesidades que enfoque en la capacidad de las instituciones de la comunidad, incluyendo al sistema escolar, de satisfacer las necesidades educativas de lo(a)s niño(a)s y de sus familias.

A las Bibliotecas:

1) Desarrollen libros y otros medios de comunicación que fomente la preparación escolar entre las familias y los niños quienes están inscritos en los programas de pre-kindergarten, pre-primaria y primaria.

A las Guarderías y a los Proveedores de Servicios de Cuidado Infantil de la Comunidad:

1) Provean un medio ambiente educativo que sea apropiado a las fases del desarrollo humano.

2) Evalúen la calidad de estos programas al asesorar qué tan apropiados son para las fases del desarrollo humano; evalúen los resultados de estos programas utilizando procedimientos de múltiples medidas los cuales son consistentes con los principios pedagógicos apropiados para las fases del desarrollo humano. Comuniquen los resultados a las familias que reciben estos servicios.

3) Compartan esta información con los profesores de primaria, los administradores y otro personal educativo.

4) Fomenten sistemas de organización para compartir recursos y asociaciones con distritos escolares de los programas de pre-kindergarten, pre-primaria y primaria.

A los familiares del estudiante:

1) Organicen y participen en organizaciones de padres de familia y maestros y de cuidado infantil con el propósito de aumentar el apoyo para los niño(a)s y las familias en estos programas.

RECOMENDACIONES PARA ESTABLECER ASOCIACIONES ENTRE LAS ESCUELAS, LAS FAMILIAS Y LAS COMUNIDADES

Al Gobierno Federal:

1) Provean incentivos financieros y reglamentos para fomentar la colaboración entre las instituciones que proveen servicios en áreas de la educación, la salud y de la asistencia pública.

2) Categoricen los fondos fiscales de tal manera que servicios en áreas de la educación, la salud y de la asistencia pública no estén fragmentados y sean provistos de una manera total a los niño(a)s y sus familias.

A los miembros de la rama legislativa del Estado de Texas:

1) Establezcan fondos económicos para proveer servicios coordinados de salubridad y de asistencia pública para los estudiantes quienes son elegibles y sus familias.

2) Implementen el *Plan de Salubridad para la Niñez Texana* (Texas Children's Health Plan) desarrollado por la Junta Directiva de Salubridad

de Texas (Texas Health Policy Task Force) para establecer un sistema financiero para asegurar el acceso a un sistema a nivel estatal para asegurar que a todos los menores, desde antes del nacimiento hasta los 18 años de edad, y a todas las mujeres embarazadas se les provea de atención médica total y de alta calidad.

3) Desarrollen una junta directiva formada de una asociación de agencias a nivel estatal (state-level interagency group) para proveer asistencia técnica en el establecimiento de un sistema de programas de salubridad conectado a la escuela (school-linked health service programs). Esta asociación funcionaría para conectar este sistema a diferentes fondos fiscales de subsidio para asistir en el desarrollo y la documentación de los resultados de estos programas.

4) Donen fondos al Departamento de Salubridad del Estado de Texas (Texas Department of Health) para asistir el inicio de estos programas en las escuelas que deseen tomar esta iniciativa.

5) Aumenten la flexibilidad en lo que se refiere a los requisitos para ser elegible a obtener los servicios de salubridad y de asistencia pública para lograr que los niño(a)s y las familias que califican para un programa tengan acceso a los servicios de varias agencias.

6) Incrementen los fondos fiscales para servicios para el cuidado infantil dedicados a proveer servicios en colaboración con el pre-kindergarten de distritos escolares y programas para padres de familia quienes son adolescentes.

A los miembros de la Mesa Directiva de Educación del Estado de Texas:

1) Desarrollen una estrategia para fomentar la asociación entre la familia, la escuela y la comunidad tomando una gran variedad de recursos y facilidades para asegurar la igualdad y la excelencia para todos los estudiantes.

A la Agencia de Educación del Estado de Texas:

1) Colaboren con otras agencias estatales para desarrollar las guías para la evaluación de la eficacia de los servicios de salubridad y comunitarios en la escuelas (school-linked health and community services).

2) Desarrollen estrategias en colaboración con los distritos escolares y las agencias estatales que proveen servicios de salubridad para distribuir y proveer fondos financieros gubernamentales federales que no son para la educación y hacer que éstos subsidien el desarrollo y el crecimiento de servicios para niño(a)s en la pre-primaria y el pre-kindergarten y sus familias.

A las agencias estatales:

1) Coordinen servicios y recursos para poder responder de la mejor manera a las necesidades de la comunidad Texana.

2) Coordinen sistemas administrativos de información (management information systems) para divulgar información y desarrollar un banco de datos para los servicios sociales (data bank) y transformar a un sistema que realmente administre caso por caso (case management system) que se base en la prevención en lugar de basarse en intervención en casos de crisis.

Al Departamento de Salubridad del Estado de Texas:

1) Provean asistencia técnica y apoyen a las escuelas que deseen tomar esta iniciativa y establecer programas de salud en las escuelas.

A los Centros de Servicios Educativos Regionales:

1) Colaboren con las entidades políticas de los condados y a nivel regional para planear y desarrollar la provisión eficaz de servicios para la comunidad que complementen los del distrito y los de la escuela.

A los Distritos Escolares:

1) Inicien y colaboren con iniciativas para alterar los mecanismos de alocación de fondos monetarios y programen los estándares de requisitos para calificar a los que reciben estos servicios de una manera por la cuel se creen incentivos para la colaboración entre los programas locales y los proveedores de estos servicios.

2) Adopten estrategias políticas para facilitar la coordinación de servicios educativos, de salubridad y para la comunidad por medio de un enfoque en el desarrollo infantil, preservación de la familia y renovación de la comunidad.

3) Coordinen los recursos con las facilidades para la salud de la comunidad con los de las agencias estatales para satisfacer las nuevas necesidades creadas a partir de la coordinación de servicios educativos, de salubridad y otros servicios de la comunidad.

4) Provean fondos fiscales e implementen un Programa General para la Guía y el Consejo Psicológico en las Escuelas (Comprehensive School Guidance Program) en cada escuela; apoyen a los consejeros/psicólogos de la escuela con asistencia administrativa para dar lugar a una más efectiva implementación del Programa General para la Guía y el Consejo Psicológico en las Escuelas.

5) Provean recursos para la capacitación profesional para establecer una red de servicios de salubridad y asistencia pública para la comunidad Texana.

6) Evalúen la eficacia de los servicios coordinados con la escuela (school-linked coordinated services).

7) Provean facilidades y fondos fiscales para programas de cuidado infantil en la escuela y programas después del día escolar (school-based after-school care programs).

A las Escuelas:

1) Conduzcan un asesoría de las necesidades que determine el grado de las necesidades de las familias con respecto a los programas de servicios de salubridad provistos en la escuela (coordinated school-linked health services programs).

2) Conduzcan el desarrollo de la capacitación profesional basándose en la asesoría de las necesidades locales, por medio del proceso de planeación para el mejoramiento escolar y la coordinación de programas educativos con los servicios comunitarios de salubridad y asistencia pública.

3) Establezcan equipos que supervisen la coordinación de programas educativos con los servicios comunitarios de salubridad y asistencia pública; respondan a las necesidades de la niñez y de sus familias quienes tienen necesidad de estos servicios; y reflecciones en los estándares de la provisión de servicios educativos y de los servicios comunitarios de salubridad y asistencia pública.

4) Basados en esta asesoría de necesidades, provean programas de cuidado infantil en las escuelas, ya sea por medio del distrito escolar o empresas privadas, los cuales alcanzan los estándares de calidad de programas para después del día escolar (after-school care) establecidos por las Asociación Nacional de Directores de Escuelas Primarias (National Association of Elementary School Principals), incluyendo las proporciones de niño a adulto de 10 a 1 para niño(a)s menores de seis años y de 12-1 para aquellos mayores de seis años de edad y que permita que lo(a)s niño(a)s elijan entre una gama de actividades que les interesan.

A las comunidades:

1) Conduzcan amplios asesoramientos de qué tan bien la educación, la salubridad y los servicios de asistencia pública de la comunidad satisfacen las necesidades de la niñez y de sus familiares. Usen estos resultados para evaluar e iniciar este método coordinado de planeación para proveer servicios de salud, educación y de asistencia pública.

A las agencias estatales que proveen servicios sociales y otras instituciones de la comunidad:

1) Colaboren con los distritos escolares y las escuelas para proveer subsidio general, incluyendo apoyo a la familia en lo que se refiere a la salud y

cuidado infantil que sea apropiado a las fases del desarrollo humano y otros servicios educativos a la niñez y a sus familias.

2) Colaboren con los distritos escolares y las escuelas para implementar programas preventivos de salubridad y para el de bienestar social.

Glosario

accelerated instruction
métodos didácticos avanzados

accountability systems
sistemas de evaluación de la responsabilidad institucional

assessment
métodos de evaluación o de examinación del estudiante

campus improvement plans
planes de mejoramiento escolar

criterion-referenced test
exámen basado en un criterio específico el cual define el rendimiento académico
day care-guardería, instituciones de cuidado infantil

developmentally appropriate
(1) pedagogía apropiada para las fases del desarrollo humano/infantil

dropout rate
índice de deserción escolar

dropout
estudiante quien abandonó sus estudios y dejó de asistir a la escuela

early care
cuidado infantil

early childhood education
educación de pre-kinder y pre-primaria; (in Mexico only: educación maternal)

early childhood and elementary education
educación de la pre-primaria y la primaria

instruction
enseñanza, métodos didácticos

learning environment
ecología, medio ambiente o clima de aprendizaje

learning styles
métodos de aprendizaje personal

mainstream, educational
estructura educativa institucional o normal

mainstreaming
inclusión

mastery
demostración de dominio, dominio

middle grades
grados intermedios

mixed grouping
agrupaciones mixtas

needs assessment
asesoramiento de necesidades basadas en la escuela

network mentor schools
red de escuelas mentoras

norm-referenced test
examinación /exámen cuya evaluación está basada en referencia a la norma de la población

performance standards
estándares de progreso o rendimiento académico

performance-based assessment
estrategias de examinación basadas en resultados del progreso o el rendimiento académico estudiantil

pilot programs
programas experimentales/piloto

policy statement
informe

readiness test
examinación para evaluar la preparación del estudiante

remediation
práctica de proveer remedios especializados para estudiantes quienes reprobaron, cursos de recuperación

retention
reprobar, retener

school climate
medio ambiente escolar, ecología educativa escolar, atmósfera de la escuela

site-based decision making
equipos locales de administración escolar, equipos escolares locales

staff development
capacitación

stakeholders
participantes interesados

standardized testing
exámenes estandarizados

tracking
seguir o limitar el curso académico o la carrera del estudiante basado en su historial académico

Mesa Directiva Para la Educación Pre-primaria y Primaria

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COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

TITLE VI, CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964; THE MODIFIED COURT ORDER, CIVIL ACTION 5281, FEDERAL DISTRICT COURT, EASTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS, TYLER DIVISION

Reviews of local education agencies pertaining to compliance with Title VI Civil Rights Act of 1964 and with specific requirements of the Modified Court Order, Civil Action No. 5281, Federal District Court, Eastern District of Texas, Tyler Division are conducted periodically by staff representatives of the Texas Education Agency. These reviews cover at least the following policies and practices:

(1) acceptance policies on student transfers from other school districts;

(2) operation of school bus routes or runs on a nonsegregated basis;

(3) nondiscrimination in extracurricular activities and the use of school facilities;

(4) nondiscriminatory practices in the hiring, assigning, promoting, paying, demoting, reassigning, or dismissing of faculty and staff members who work with children;

(5) enrollment and assignment of students without discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin;

(6) nondiscriminatory practices relating to the use of a student's first language; and

(7) evidence of published procedures for hearing complaints and grievances.

In addition to conducting reviews, the Texas Education Agency staff representatives check complaints of discrimination made by a citizen or citizens residing in a school district where it is alleged discriminatory practices have occurred or are occurring.

Where a violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act is found, the findings are reported to the Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education.

If there is a direct violation of the Court Order in Civil Action No. 5281 that cannot be cleared through negotiation, the sanctions required by the Court Order are applied.

TITLE VII, CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964 AS AMENDED BY THE EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY ACT OF 1972; EXECUTIVE ORDERS 11246 AND 11375; EQUAL PAY ACT OF 1964; TITLE IX, EDUCATION AMENDMENTS; REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 AS AMENDED; 1974 AMENDMENTS TO THE WAGE-HOUR LAW EXPANDING THE AGE DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT ACT OF 1967; VIETNAM ERA VETERANS READJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE ACT OF 1972 AS AMENDED; IMMIGRATION REFORM AND CONTROL ACT OF 1986; AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT OF 1990; AND THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1991.

The Texas Education Agency shall comply fully with the nondiscrimination provisions of all federal and state laws, rules, and regulations by assuring that no person shall be excluded from consideration for recruitment, selection, appointment, training, promotion, retention, or any other personnel action, or be denied any benefits or participation in any educational programs or activities which it operates on the grounds of race, religion, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or veteran status (except where age, sex, or disability constitutes a bona fide occupational qualification necessary to proper and efficient administration). The Texas Education Agency is an Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action employer.

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